Turkey Tips

Guidelines for Safe Turkey Preparation and Storage

Frozen Turkeys

- Always keep frozen until ready to thaw for cooking. Turkey should feel solid (rock hard) to the touch. Can be stored in the freezer for up to one year.

Fresh Turkeys

- Always refrigerate immediately after bringing home.
- Use within one to two days after purchase for optimal quality and safety.

Thawing

- Never thaw until ready to cook and never thaw on a kitchen counter. Both these practices promote bacterial growth that can reach dangerous levels.
- Always thaw turkey in the refrigerator whenever possible. This is the safest way. Keep in original wrap on a tray or pan. Follow these thawing guidelines:

Whole Turkey

8-12 pounds	1 to 2 days
12-16 pounds	2 to 3 days
16-20 pounds	3 to 4 days
20-24 pounds	4 to 5 days

Pieces of Whole Turkey

Half, quarter, half-breast ..... 1 to 2 days

- To thaw in water, keep in original wrap and place in cold water. If wrapping is torn, place in another plastic bag and seal tightly. Change water every 30 minutes as a general rule. Follow these thawing guidelines:

Whole Turkey

8-12 pounds	4 to 6 hours
12-16 pounds	6 to 9 hours
16-20 pounds	9 to 11 hours
20-24 pounds	11 to 12 hours

Stuffing

- When preparing turkey, be sure to practice proper hygiene and wash hands, utensils and sink after they have come into contact with raw turkey.
- Wait to stuff turkey until it is just ready to go into the oven to reduce bacterial growth.

Roasting

- Never partially cook a stuffed turkey one day and complete cooking the next. Bacterial growth could be enhanced.
- Always roast according to label instructions for temperature and time.
- Never cook at very low temperatures for prolonged periods of time. The meat may not reach a sufficient temperature to kill bacteria fast enough and could be unsafe to eat.
- Always remove stuffing as soon as the turkey is removed from the oven. Harmful bacteria may grow in the stuffing if it sits in the bird after it is cooked.

Carving

- Always use a clean surface and utensils when carving. Never reuse the same knife, other utensils or cutting board that were used to prepare the raw turkey.

Serving

- Never leave food out for prolonged periods of time. Food left out for more than two hours can result in food poisoning — even in heated serving units such as hot trays.

Storing Leftovers

- Divide large quantities into smaller portions and store in several small or shallow covered containers. This ensures food will get colder more quickly and bacteria is less likely to grow.

For further information please contact:

DEHS

County of San Bernardino • Department of Public Health
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Food Program
385 North Arrowhead Avenue
San Bernardino, CA 902415-0160
(909) 387-4608

Visit our web site: www.sbcounty.gov/dehs

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