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Ladies Have You Heard?

By Doris Thomas
Lancaster Extension
Home Economist



PROPER HANDLING OF TURKEY

Assuming you have already purchased a frozen turkey for Thursday's big Thanksgiving meal or at least you know what kind and size you are going to

buy, the first step in preparing the turkey for cooking is to thaw it. The safest way to thaw a turkey is in the refrigerator. It may take two to four days depending on the size of your bird. Many people complain about the length of time it

takes by this method and the amount of room it takes up the refrigerator.

Here is a quick method for thawing frozen turkey safely at room temperature that was investigated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the turkey industry. First, find two paper bags — the type you bring home from the grocery store. Place one bag inside the other. Leave the frozen turkey in its original wrap, put it inside the double-layer of bags, then close the end of the bags completely. It is important to keep the paper bags closed. This holds a cool layer of insulated air inside which keeps the surface of the turkey at relatively low temperatures while the inside parts thaw. The thawing time for an

eight to 12 pound turkey should be about 12 hours, larger birds about 16 hours.

Once the turkey has thawed, handle it like fresh turkey. Do not let it out at room temperature, either refrigerate it or cook it.

Today's better bred and fed turkeys cook faster and at lower temperatures than in the past. Researchers suggest oven temperatures as low as 250 degrees Fahrenheit and no higher than 325 degrees F. for whole, ready-to-cook turkeys. A correctly placed meat thermometer, inserted in the center of the inside high muscle (or the thickest part of the breast), should register about 180-185 degrees Fahrenheit to give juicy meat. To be accurate, the thermometer should not touch bone. There is no substitute for an accurate meat thermometer to assure perfection every time.

Play it safe. Refrigerate meat, gravy, broth and stuffing each in a separate container immediately after the meal. Use all leftovers in two or three days, otherwise freeze them. Use cooked, frozen turkey meat within 30 days. Do not freeze an uncooked stuffed turkey or a roasted stuffed turkey. Home freezers do not freeze such solid forms fast enough to be safe.

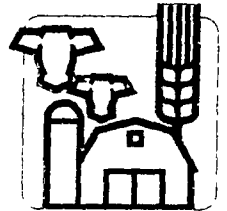
If you have any doubts about the safety of leftover

turkey, stuffing or gravy, remember the food safety slogan of — "If in doubt, throw it out."

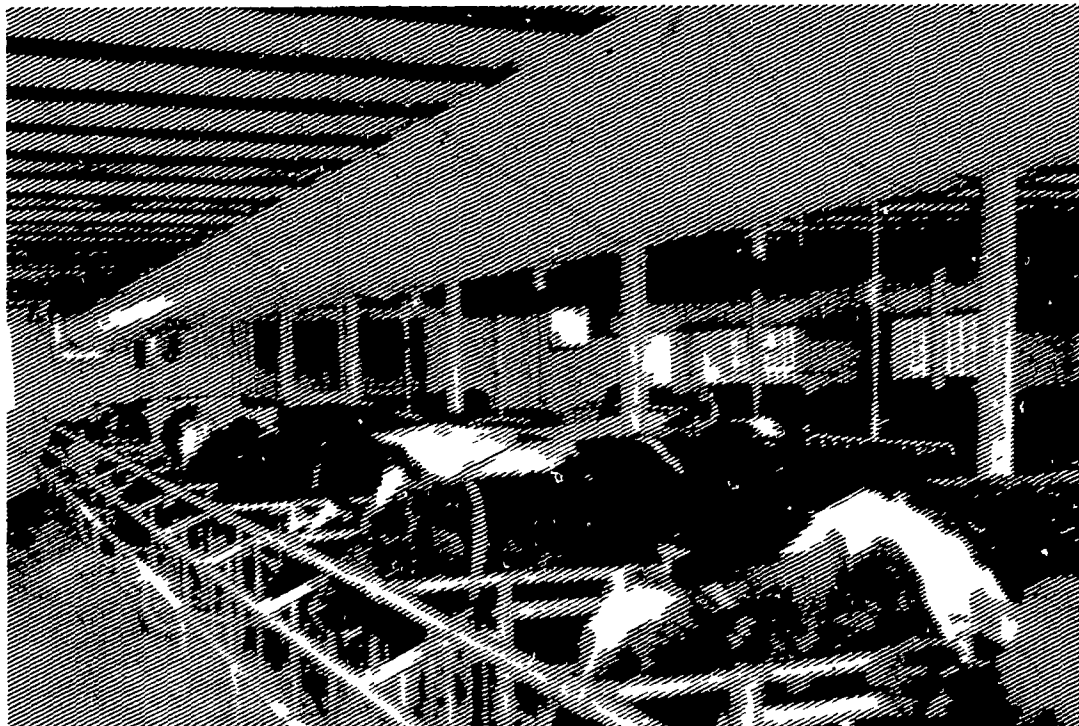
FIRE SAFETY BE PREPARED

One of the highest ranking causes of home fires is still human carelessness. Take a few minutes to think about fire safety around your home. Are your electrical cords worn? In need of repair or replacement? Are those same cords under rugs or tacked to walls? If so, you may be asking fire to visit your home. Fire safety now could prevent a fire tragedy later. Remember, the best way to keep a fire from spreading is not let it start.

In the event of a home fire, do you think you could react to the emergency? Could you operate a fire extinguisher? Would your family remember predetermined escape routes? Would you call the fire department immediately? I urge you to get your family together now to go over these important points before fire strike. Be prepared.



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