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**Safe Food Handling
 Essential for a
 Happy Thanksgiving**
 Morris G. Mast

Thanksgiving is a festive season, involving good friends, good times and good food. For most of us, the day focuses on the Thanksgiving dinner and a delicious roasted turkey. Unfortunately, it also can be an occasion that lends itself to poor food-handling practices, and in the worst scenario, foodborne illness.

There has been much media attention in the past two to three years regarding food safety, espe-

cially on the roles of production agriculture and the food processor in assuring a safe food supply. However, most foodborne illnesses occur due to mishandling of the food in the home or food service institution.

Fortunately, these events can be controlled if these end-users of the food supply are aware of potential hazards, know how to prevent them, and most importantly, practice what they know. Mishandling of turkey frequently occurs in four areas...thawing frozen birds, stuffing, roasting, and storing leftovers.

Thawing
 Many turkeys are purchased frozen. The key to safe thawing is always to keep the turkey cold; therefore, you will need to plan ahead and allow adequate time for the thawing method you choose. Never thaw turkeys at room temperature. Thawing in the refrigerator is the preferred method for safety reasons; however, plan on 24 hours for each 5 pounds of turkey, so that a 15-pound bird will require 3 days to thaw.

If you forget to thaw the turkey until the day before, you can use the cold-water method. Immerse the frozen bird in its original wrap in clean, cold water. Change the cold water frequently. Allow 30 minutes per pound, so that a 15-pound bird will require 7-8 hours to thaw.

A third method (for the procrastinators among us!) is to use a microwave oven. Assuming your oven is large enough to accommodate the turkey, follow manufacturers guidelines for proper settings and times required to safely thaw the bird.

Stuffing

You may wish to enjoy the

dressing or stuffing without stuffing the bird, for example heat the stuffing in a separate container. This will save work and the unstuffed bird will require less time to cook. If you do stuff the bird, never do it far in advance of roasting; this invites trouble since it provides a wonderful environment for bacterial growth and potential problems. Also be sure to not overstuff...stuffing does expand when heated.

Roasting


A recommended oven temperature is 325 degrees Fahrenheit. By using a much lower temperature, such as 250 degrees Fahrenheit, too much time is required to elevate the temperature of the turkey meat and stuffing to destroy bacteria. Once roasting has started, it should be completed to an end-temperature of 180-185 degrees Fahrenheit in the inner thigh and 165 degrees Fahrenheit in the stuffing; interrupted cooking enhances the possibility of bacterial growth. To assure adequate heating, use an accurate meat thermometer to determine the above temperature.

If you wish to cook your turkey using a microwave oven, check the

manufacturers instructions. Using an oven cooking bag during microwave heating ensures the most even cooking.

Storing leftovers

After enjoying your properly thawed, stuffed and roasted turkey, it is imperative to properly handle leftovers to assure food safety. As a guideline, do not keep the roasted bird at room temperature for more than two hours. Leftovers should be wrapped or placed in a covered container and refrigerated or frozen immediately after your Thanksgiving dinner. Don't leave the turkey sitting out on the counter for people to nibble at while festivities continue. After the turkey has been cooked, it is susceptible to post-cook contamination. Cooking has destroyed any harmful microorganisms; however, new ones like Staphylococcus aureus, which people may harbor and easily transmit to the turkey, will grow well without competition from other bacteria. Leftover refrigerated turkey should be eaten within 3-4 days; frozen turkey should be consumed within 4-6 months for best quality.

Ida's Notebook

 Ida Risser

Time to prepare for Thanksgiving. Just a few more days to plan a menu and gather the ingredients. The only thing that I will need to buy is a big turkey. Actually, I guess there are a few more things that I'll need, such as, bread, eggs and cranberry sauce.

The cellar shelves are lined with jars of fruit and the two freezers are full of vegetables. There are plenty of pumpkins stored away and so there will be several pies for Thanksgiving. I expect only two of our six children will be able to feast with us. It is a satisfying thing to be self-sufficient and at some of our meals I can say that everything on the table came from our farm.

Recently we had a family dinner as our son, his wife and baby came from Memphis, Tennessee, for a high school reunion. Their one year old is a hefty 27 pounds with lots of curls. I'm hoping he will not be a football player as some people have suggested. I would worry about some serious injury happening to him.

They were here in Lancaster County less than two days. It seems that if we are willing to pay the price, we certainly can cover a lot of miles in an airplane in a short period of time. Sometimes it takes longer to drive in a car from the airport to our destination than the flight itself. And, then there is the time change to consider too.

Last week my husband and I traveled to northern Pennsylvania to visit our youngest daughter and give Allen an opportunity to hunt for turkey. I took my fishing pole along but neither of us had any luck. However, we were lucky to have very nice weather for our short trip.

**Farm Women
 Lancaster Society 14**

Lancaster Farm Women Society 14 met November 8 at the home of Donna Coleman. Devotions were led by Marion Rohrer. For roll call each member

showed an antique. It was like a stroll down memory lane.

A health tip was given by Esther Landis.

Members each brought three dozen cookies and 10 copies of the

recipe. Members walked around the cookie display and took as many as they had contributed.

For the December 8th meeting, members will take a bus trip to NBC and Radio City Music Hall in New York City, N.Y.

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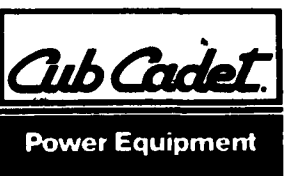
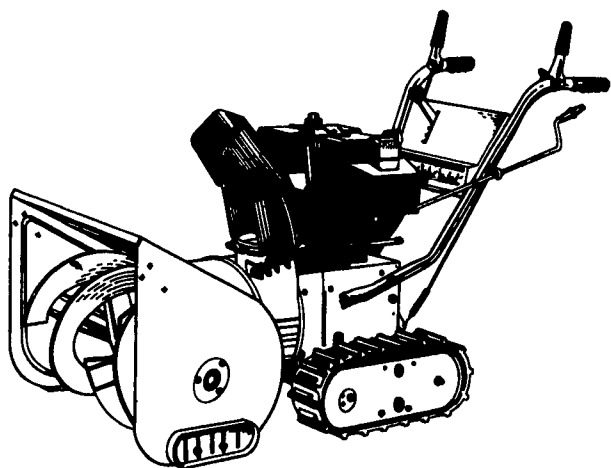
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