

Turkey Time

From the time your purchase your turkey to the time you store the leftovers, there are crucial steps to assure a safe and healthy holiday. If you're preparing a turkey that you've had in the freezer for some time, you will want to plan ahead. Figure it will take 24 hours for every five pounds to thaw. So, if you have a 20 pound turkey, take it out of the freezer and place it in the refrigerator on Sunday, four days before Thanksgiving. A word to the

wise — do not allow turkey to thaw on the counter. Bacteria are naturally present on turkey and grow rapidly at room temperature.

What about stuffing the ol' bird? Food safety specialists suggest we avoid stuffing turkey, but if you insist, stuff it right before you put it in the oven. Over the years, many people have stuffed the turkey the night before. All the bacteria in the cavity of the turkey love the moist stuffing and multiply over

the night. In fact, a few bacteria can turn into millions within two hours. To assure the safety of your guests, cook the stuffing outside the turkey.

Most of us guess when turkey is done. The pop-up meat thermometer in turkey are often not accurate. To take the guesswork out of cooking turkey, use a meat thermometer. Not only does this help you to make sure the turkey is done, but it also prevents serving a dry overcooked turkey or any other meat dish. When purchasing a thermometer, make sure it's for meat and poultry. Don't confuse it with a candy thermometer.

If using an instant-read or digital-type thermometer, insert the meat thermometer into the inner thigh near the breast of turkey without hitting the bone. While the desired temperature of the meat is 180 degrees F, you'll want to make sure the stuffing reaches 165 degrees F. The time it will take to reach these temperatures depends on

the size of the turkey and whether it is stuffed.

We all tend to enjoy sitting around the table after we've filled our tummies. But do remember to debone and refrigerate leftover turkey within two hours of when it's finished cooking. This will make it safe to enjoy the leftovers for the next several days. Use the leftover refrigerated turkey and stuffing within three to four days and gravy within one to two days. If you want the leftovers to last longer, place them in the freezer. When you decide to enjoy the leftovers, make sure you reheat them to 165 degrees F even if reheating in the microwave. If you happen to be cooking Thanksgiving dinner in your

kitchen and taking it somewhere else, there's one rule of thumb you need to remember: "Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold." Assuming that you will be serving this food within two hours transport hot foods at temperatures above 140 degrees F and cold foods below 40 degrees F. If you will be eating after two hours, all foods prepared should be properly cooled at home and reheated to 165 degrees F at your destination.

If you would like more information, call the Penn State Extension Office at 836-3196 or the USDA hotline at 1-800-535-4555.

Source: Mary Alice Gettings, M.S. R.D. C.D.E.

MILK
Where's your mustache?



Baking Consultant

From November 1 through December 24, consumers simply need to dial 1-800-782-9606 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. (CST) for great baking advice, to request recipes or to get help with home baking emergencies. Every day of the week, the Bakeline's expert home economists will assist thousands of callers from across the nation. Extensively trained in the Land O'Lake Test Kitchens, all 27 Bakeline home economists return each year, giving precious time during the holiday season to help others achieve baking bliss.

"The Bakeline has been called an American holiday tradition, and we're happy to offer a helping hand to thousands of people who call the Bakeline each year," said Lydia Botham, director of consumer affairs and the Land O'Lakes Test Kitchens. "We get calls from all types of bakers, from novices to experts, and our home economists are there to talk them through a recipe every step of the way"

This year, all callers will receive a newly designed leaflet filled with great baking tips from the Bakeline home economists and five holiday recipes. A variety of delicious recipes are included, from Almond Candy Jewels, ideal for gift giving, to the Maple Pecan Kringle, a delicious selection for a holiday brunch.

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