

# Serving Turkey Safely

**FNH-00469**



If you are like many Alaskans, you probably cook turkey only once or twice a year. Turkey dinners have been the source of foodborne illness the day after eating the meal.

Harmful bacteria grow best in temperatures between 40° and 140°F. The total time a turkey is held in this temperature danger zone should not be more than two hours.



## HOW MUCH TO BUY? HOW LONG TO THAW? HOW LONG TO COOK?

Weight in pounds	Thawing time, days in refrigerator	Thawing time, hours in cold water	Cooking time, hours at 325°F
4 – 12	1 – 3	2 – 6	2¾ – 3
12 – 16	3 – 4	6 – 8	3 – 3¾
16 – 20	4 – 5	8 – 10	4¼ – 4½
20 – 24	5 – 6	10 – 12	4½ – 5

## Hints and Safety Reminders

- ✓ When buying a turkey, allow 1 pound per person.
- ✓ Thaw turkey in the refrigerator or cold water. See table for details.
- ✓ A thawed turkey or an unfrozen turkey may be stored in the refrigerator and cooked within 1 to 2 days.
- ✓ When thawing turkey in **cold water**, wrap it securely so that water is not able to leak through; change the water every 30 minutes.
- ✓ When thawing turkey in a **microwave oven**, check owner's manual for size turkey that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound and the power level to use for thawing. Remove all outside wrapping and place turkey in a microwave-safe dish to catch drips. Cook turkey immediately; do not refrigerate or refreeze.
- ✓ Stuff turkey immediately before cooking and remove stuffing as soon as cooking is completed.
- ✓ Turkey is done when the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast reach the **minimum** internal temperature of 165°F.
- ✓ If you stuff the turkey, stuffing should reach a **minimum** internal temperature of 165°F. For optimum safety, cook stuffing outside of the bird, in a baking dish.
- ✓ Refrigerate all leftovers within 2 hours. Discard any turkey, stuffing or gravy left at room temperatures longer than 2 hours.
- ✓ Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within 3 to 4 days. Use gravy within 1 to 2 days.

*For more information, call the Food Safety and Preservation Hotline at 1-888-823-3663, contact the Ask the Expert website at [www.uaf.edu/ces/hhfd/expert](http://www.uaf.edu/ces/hhfd/expert) or contact your local Cooperative Extension Service office or Kari vanDelden, Extension Faculty, Health, Home and Family Development, at 907-443-2320 or [klvandelden@alaska.edu](mailto:klvandelden@alaska.edu).*

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12-84/MS/BL/2000

November 2010



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