

Keep it Clean, Safe For Thanksgiving

Tallahassee Democrat

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He who thanks but with the lips thanks but in part; the full, the true Thanksgiving comes from the heart. ~**J.A. Shedd**

Thanksgiving celebrations trace their origins back many centuries. However, this very important day in the United States was not declared a national holiday until mandated by federal legislation in 1941.

For many, Thanksgiving is also recognized as the beginning of a much broader holiday season. One of the *many* special times family and friends gather to celebrate, share a meal and give thanks for their many blessings.

As you prepare your family food favorites, please remember to include a most important ingredient in your celebrations, **safety**, before, during and after the feast. Merriment can change to misery if food makes you or others ill. Listed are simple, helpful food safety tips to keep all your celebrations happy.

Clean: The first rule of safe food preparation in the home is to keep everything clean.

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling any food.
- Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next item.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and when necessary use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- **Do not** rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking. Washing these foods makes it more likely for bacteria to spread to areas around the sink and countertops.

Separate: Don't give bacteria the opportunity to spread from one food to another (cross-contamination).

- Keep raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked. Take this precaution while shopping in the store, when storing in the refrigerator at home, and while preparing meals.
- Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood—and from kitchen utensils used for those products.
- Do not put cooked meat or other food that is ready to eat on an unwashed plate that has held any raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, or their juices.

Cook: Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

- Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Use a food thermometer to make certain meat, poultry, and fish are cooked to a safe internal temperature. To check a turkey for safety, insert a food thermometer into the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. The turkey is safe when the temperature reaches 165°F. If the turkey is stuffed, the temperature of the stuffing should be 165°F.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.

- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. When making your own eggnog or other recipe calling for raw eggs, use pasteurized shell eggs, liquid or frozen pasteurized egg products, or powdered egg whites.
- Don't eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.

Chill: Refrigerate foods quickly because harmful bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature.

- Refrigerate leftovers and takeout foods—and *any* type of food that should be refrigerated—within two hours. That includes pumpkin pie!
- Set your refrigerator at or below 40°F and the freezer at 0°F. Check both periodically with an appliance thermometer.
- **Never defrost food at room temperature.** Food can be defrosted safely in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Food thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.
- Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw food. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs four to five days to thaw completely when thawed in the refrigerator.
- Don't taste food that looks or smells questionable. **(when in doubt, throw it out)**
- Leftovers should be used within three to four days.

Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill: a perfect system to observe before, during and after every holiday celebration.

Information on food safety is available by phone at:

The FDA Food Information Line
1-888-SAFEFOOD (1-888-723-3366)

The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)
TTY 1-800-256-7072



Stop by the University of Florida IFAS - Leon County Extension office at 615 Paul Russell Road, Tallahassee Florida weekdays 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m. to pick up your free ***Kitchen Companion: Your Safe Food Handbook.***

Sources: <http://food.unl.edu/web/safety/thanksgiving-food-prep#2>
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Turkey_Basics_Safe_Cooking/index.asp
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Turkey_Basics_Safe_Thawing/index.asp
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Roasting_Those_Other_Holiday_Meats.pdf

If you have a question, write to Heidi Copeland, Extension Agent Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Florida/IFAS Extension--Leon County, 615 Paul Russell Road, Tallahassee, FL 32301-7099; or call the Extension Office 487-3006, between 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m. weekdays.

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