

Observe food safety over Thanksgiving

This week millions of Americans will gather family and friends around the dinner table to give thanks. But for those preparing the meal, it can be a stressful time.

For many it is the largest meal they have cooked all year, leaving plenty of room for mistakes that could cause foodborne illness.

“Unsafe handling and undercooking of food can lead to serious foodborne illness,” said Al Almanza, Deputy Undersecretary for Food Safety at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“Turkeys may contain *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, harmful pathogens that are only destroyed by properly preparing and cooking the turkey. Similarly, leaving leftovers out for too long, or not taking care to properly clean cooking and serving surfaces, can lead to other types of illness. We want to be sure that all consumers know the steps they can take and resources that are available to them to help prepare a safe and enjoyable holiday meal.”

To avoid making everyone at the table sick, the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) offers five tips for a food-safe Thanksgiving:

Tip 1: Don't Wash That Turkey.

According to the most recent Food Safety Survey, conducted by the Food and Drug Administration, 68 percent of the public washes whole turkey before cooking it. USDA does not recommend washing raw meat and poultry before cooking. Washing raw meat and poultry can cause bacteria to spread up to three feet away. Cooking (baking, broiling, boiling, frying or grilling) meat and poultry to the right temperature kills any bacteria that may be present, so washing meat and poultry is not necessary.

Tip 2: Use the refrigerator, the cold-water method or the

microwave to defrost a frozen turkey.

There are three safe ways to defrost a turkey: in the refrigerator, in cold water and in the microwave oven. Thawing food in the refrigerator is the safest method because the turkey will defrost at a consistent, safe temperature. It will take 24 hours for every five pounds of weight for a turkey to thaw in the refrigerator. To thaw in cold water, submerge the bird in its original wrapper in cold tap water, changing the water every 30 minutes. For instructions on microwave defrosting, refer to your microwave's owner's manual. Cold water and microwave thawing can also be used if your bird did not entirely defrost in the refrigerator.

Tip 3: Use a meat thermometer.

The only way to determine if a turkey (or any meat, poultry or seafood) is cooked is to check its internal temperature with a food thermometer. A whole turkey should be checked in three locations: the innermost part of the thigh, the innermost part of the wing and the thickest part of the breast. Your thermometer should register 165°F in all three of these places. The juices rarely run clear at this temperature, and when they do the bird is often overcooked. Using the food thermometer is the best way to ensure your turkey is cooked, but not overdone.

Tip 4: Don't store food outside, even if it's cold.

Storing food outside is not food-safe for two reasons. The first is that animals, both wild and domesticated, can get into food stored outside, consuming it or contaminating it. The second is temperature variation. Just like your car gets warm in the summer, a plastic food storage container in the sun can heat up and climb into the danger zone (above 40°F). The best way to keep that extra Thanksgiving food at a safe temperature (below 40°F) is in a cooler with ice.

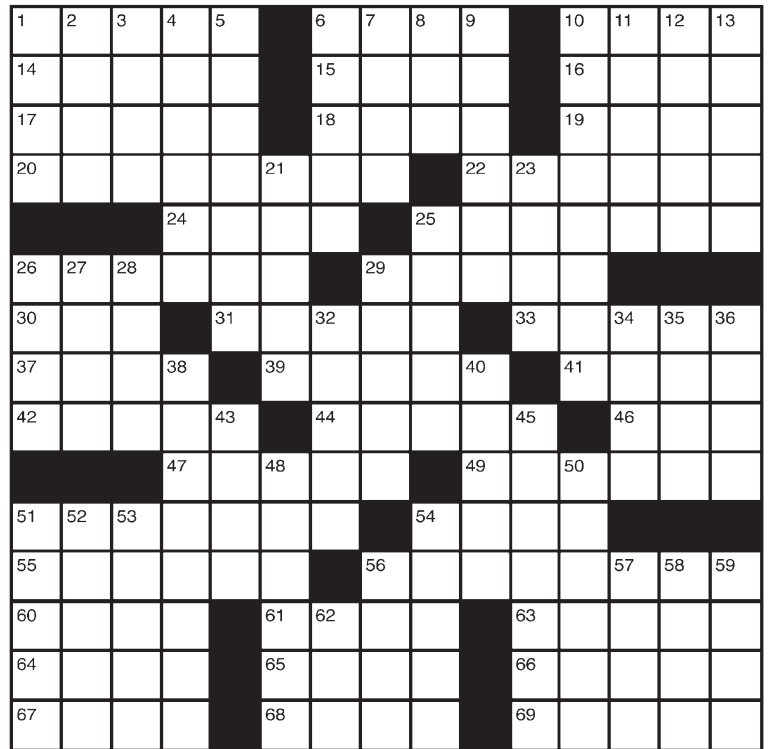
Tip 5: Leftovers are good in the refrigerator for up to four days.

Cut the turkey off the bone and refrigerate it as soon as you can, within 2 hours of the turkey coming out of the oven. Leftovers will last for four days in the refrigerator, so if you know you won't use them right away, pack them into freezer bags or airtight containers and freeze. For best quality, use your leftover turkey within four months. After that, the leftovers will still be safe, but can dry out or lose flavor.

The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 Fork part
 - 6 As comfortable ___ old shoe
 - 10 Mimicked
 - 14 Classic name for a dog
 - 15 Roy Rogers and ___ Evans
 - 16 Indian prince
 - 17 Greek letter
 - 18 Hooters
 - 19 Ukraine's capital
 - 20 Marco Rubio & Barbara Boxer
 - 22 In a __; hypnotized
 - 24 Movement of the waves
 - 25 Jupiter & Mars
 - 26 Stand up for
 - 29 "The Raven" and "Trees"
 - 30 Cochlea's place
 - 31 Autry & Wilder
 - 33 Walks the floor
 - 37 Get ready, for short
 - 39 Cowboy competition
 - 41 ___ as; for example
 - 42 "Guilty" and "Not guilty"
 - 44 Tie the knot
 - 46 Fraternity letter
 - 47 Make off with
 - 49 Shout with a deep voice
 - 51 Hot dog topper
 - 54 Longest river
 - 55 Whole
 - 56 Survives longer than
 - 60 Eden resident
 - 61 ___ in; wearing
 - 63 Boise's state
 - 64 Racing sled
 - 65 Ripped
 - 66 At no time
 - 67 Observes
 - 68 Impudent talk
 - 69 Say "Hi" to
- DOWN**
- 1 ___ and cons
 - 2 Italy's capital
 - 3 Large kitchen appliance
 - 4 Nullify; make ineffective
 - 5 Shredding cheese
 - 6 Worship
 - 7 Cutting tools
 - 8 Laundry soap
 - 9 Settle snugly
 - 10 "The Natural State"
 - 11 Patriot and pamphlet writer Thomas ___
 - 12 DVD player remote button
 - 13 Annable and Barry
 - 21 Stranger
 - 23 Freeway exit
 - 25 Baffling question
 - 26 Actor Johnny
 - 27 British noble
 - 28 On the house
 - 29 Ride a bike
 - 32 Wanderer
 - 34 Ringlet of hair
 - 35 Resound
 - 36 Exhibition
 - 38 Hobbies
 - 40 Planet's path
 - 43 Night twinkler
 - 45 ___ at; berating
 - 48 Builds
 - 50 Guide; director
 - 51 Lunch & dinner
 - 52 Excessive
 - 53 Theater part
 - 54 Some paintings
 - 56 Rowers' items
 - 57 Keep for later
 - 58 You, biblically
 - 59 Type; variety
 - 62 Mauna ___



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

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