

Frozen Turkey Safety Tips

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To ensure proper handling, storage and preparation of frozen turkey, follow these tips:

Buying

- Always look for the "safe food handling" label on packages, which will provide tips for proper food handling and cooking.
- Make sure the packaging is tightly sealed.
- Pick up the turkey and other meat items last and ask to have them bagged separately from other groceries.

Storing

- Make sure the refrigerator temperature is set below 40°F.

- To freeze an uncooked, whole turkey, leave turkey in its original wrapping.
- To freeze uncooked turkey parts, wrap in freezer wrap or tightly sealed freezer bags and mark with the date.
- To freeze cooked turkey, wrap in freezer wrap or tightly sealed freezer bags and mark with the date.
- A frozen, whole turkey can be kept for approximately 12 months in a freezer set at or below 0°F.
- Frozen turkey parts can be kept for approximately nine months in a freezer set at or below 0°F.
- Cooked turkey can be kept frozen for approximately two to six months in a freezer set at or below 0°F.
- Cooked turkey should be eaten or frozen within three to four days.

Preparing

- Wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds before, during and after handling raw poultry.
- Use two separate cutting boards to avoid cross-contamination: one for raw meats, poultry and seafood and the other for ready-to-eat foods.
- Refer to the "safe food handling" label on the turkey package for proper preparation.
- Thaw turkey in the refrigerator (never on the counter) or in the microwave using the defrost setting.
- For safe thawing in the refrigerator, allow about one day for every four to five pounds of turkey to thaw in the refrigerator. Place the turkey in a pan or tray to catch juices that may leak.
- When thawing turkey in the microwave, follow owner's manual. Cook immediately after thawing in the microwave because some areas may become warm and begin to cook during microwaving.
- Turkey may also be thawed in cold water in its original airtight packaging or in a leak-proof bag. Submerge the bird or cut-up parts in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Estimate minimum thawing time to be 30 minutes per pound for whole turkey.
- Do not refreeze thawed turkey.
- Use a food thermometer to cook to a proper internal temperature of at least 165°F.
- When cooking a stuffed turkey, the center of the stuffing must reach 165°F. For safety and uniform doneness of turkey, cook stuffing separately.
- Refrigerate leftover turkey promptly within two hours.

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