

# Health & Safety Tip #13

## Food Safety - Talking Turkey

This time of year, many families sit down to feasts of roast turkey with stuffing. Turkey lovers and cooks everywhere should observe the following practices when cooking and storing this popular holiday fowl:

### STORING

- Fresh, unfrozen turkey should be loosely covered with wax paper or aluminum foil and stored in the coldest part of the refrigerator.
- Fresh turkey should be cooked within 2-3 days of purchase, while frozen turkeys can be kept frozen for up to 6 months.

### THAWING AND PREPARATION

- Frozen turkeys should be thawed in the refrigerator or cold water, with the plastic wrap kept on. Keeping meat cold until it is completely thawed eliminates the possibility of spoilage organisms from accumulating.
- Consult a cooking timetable for the correct cooking time based on the weight of the turkey. A meat thermometer, inserted into the middle of the stuffing or thigh (without touching bone), must register 85°C (185°F) when fully cooked. Another test for doneness is to move the drumstick up and down - it should be soft and move easily.
- Never partially cook a turkey one day and continue cooking it the next. This allows food poisoning bacteria to quickly multiply.
- Never pre-stuff a turkey the day before it is roasted, as it will take too long to properly heat the centre of the chilled dressing and may leave live bacteria.
- Many professional chefs are now cooking stuffing separately. If you stuff your turkey, do so immediately before cooking and remove all stuffing immediately after cooking.
- A cooked turkey should never be left out after carving. Instead, place it in the oven to keep hot or in the refrigerator. Cooked turkey can be stored refrigerated for 3-4 days, or frozen for up to 4 months.

### BASIC RULES OF FOOD HANDLING

- Wash hands thoroughly before and during food prep.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils that come in contact with raw meat or poultry to prevent the contamination of cooked or other ready-to-eat foods.
- Do not use foods from bulging or damaged cans.
- Keep cold foods at or below 4°C (40°F) and hot foods at or above 60°C (140°F).
- Cool leftover foods quickly to reduce the risk of bacterial growth.

