



GOVERNMENT OF GUAM

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
DIPATTAMENTON SALUT PUPBLEKO YAN SETBISION SUSIAT



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Safely Prepare your Holiday Meals on Thanksgiving Day and during the Holiday Season

It's the most wonderful time of the year. The time for family and friends to gather and celebrate the holidays. To celebrate the occasion, we prepare the best meal to serve. Whether we plan for a small group or for a large group, the first thing on our planning list should be food safety. It does not matter if you are a seasoned chef or if this is your first time to prepare a holiday meal, the Department of Public Health and Social Services' Division of Environmental Health (DEH) wants you to be aware of food safety issues when thawing, preparing, stuffing, and cooking your turkey.

Food safety is especially important as you prepare a holiday meal. Within the last couple of years, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has investigated outbreaks of foodborne illness that were caused by bacteria in jalapenos, spinach, frozen pizza, frozen pot pies, and frozen beef patties. CDC estimates that each year roughly one out of six Americans (or 48 million people) get sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases.

When preparing a turkey, DEH recommends cooks follow these guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service:

Safe Thawing

Thawing turkeys must be kept at a safe temperature. The "danger zone" is between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit- the temperature range where foodborne bacteria multiply rapidly. While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely, but as soon as it begins to thaw, bacteria that may have been present before freezing can begin to grow again, if it is in the "danger zone." There are three (3) safe ways to thaw food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in a microwave oven.

Safe Preparation

Bacteria present on raw poultry can contaminate your hands, utensils, and work surfaces as you prepare the turkey. If these areas are not cleaned thoroughly before working with other foods, bacteria from the raw poultry can then be transferred to other foods. After working with raw poultry, always wash your hands, utensils, and work surfaces before they touch other foods.

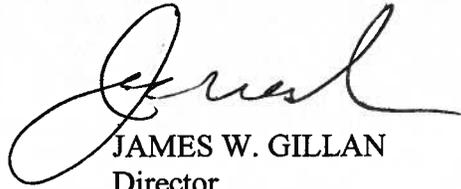
Safe Stuffing

Cook the stuffing outside the turkey in a casserole dish. If you place stuffing inside the turkey, do so just before cooking, and use a food thermometer. Make sure the center of the stuffing reaches a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached 165 degrees Fahrenheit, possibly resulting in foodborne illness.

Safe Cooking

Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 degrees Fahrenheit and be sure the turkey is completely thawed. Place turkey breast-side up on a flat wire rack in a shallow roasting pan 2 to 2 ½ inches deep. Check the internal temperature at the center of the stuffing and meaty portion of the breast, thigh, and wing joint using a food thermometer. Cooking times will vary. The food thermometer must reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Let the turkey stand 20 minutes before removing all stuffing from the cavity and carving the meat.

For more information on safe poultry handling, visit the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Services' website at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/fact_sheets/lets_talk_turkey/index.asp.



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