



**Media Contact:**

Kurman Communications, Inc.  
Cindy Kurman or Elisa Rascia  
(312) 651-9000  
[team@kurman.com](mailto:team@kurman.com)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Food Safety Tips—From Start to Finish—For Thanksgiving Dinner**

For most people, Thanksgiving dinner is the biggest and most busily prepared meal they cook all year. From menu planning to handling leftovers, there are many opportunities for slip ups to contaminate food. [Stop Foodborne Illness](#), a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens, is giving cooks a hand with tips for reducing the risk of foodborne illness every step of Thanksgiving Day.

Food safety starts at the grocery store. Brush up on these preparation tips to ensure dinner starts on a safe note.

- [Separate goods when shopping](#). Keep raw poultry, meat and seafood away from other food as much as possible. A simple way to prevent meat juices from dripping onto other groceries is by putting these items in separate plastic bags (brought from home or provided by the store) as you shop. Pro Tip: put perishable items, like meat and poultry, in your cart last.
- [Buy the right bird](#). Whole turkeys are sold fresh or frozen and buying the right one is crucial. For those who do their Thanksgiving shopping in advance, Stop Foodborne Illness suggests selecting a frozen bird to reduce the risk foodborne illness. Those who prefer serving a fresh turkey should purchase it within two days of Thanksgiving dinner.
- Shop and drop (groceries off at home). Though it can be tempting to run errands or browse early Black Friday sales after grocery shopping, food should not be left in the car for long periods of time as dangerous microorganisms can contaminate produce and poultry. Go home immediately and store food in the refrigerator, freezer or pantry before doing anything else.
- [Defrost safely](#). There are three safe ways to defrost a turkey: in the refrigerator, cold water or microwave. Refrigerator thawing takes the longest—24 hours for every 5 pounds of turkey—but is the best method since it uses the least amount of labor and will defrost at a consistent, safe temperature (a 15lb. turkey will take 3 days). To thaw in cold water, submerge the bird in its original wrapper in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. This method takes less time, but requires more attention. Estimate 30 minutes per pound (a 15lb. turkey will take 7.5 hours, and 15 water changes). For those who forgot to defrost until the last minute and need to thaw fast, refer to your owner's manual for instructions on microwave defrosting. Pro

tip: defrost in advance. A thawed turkey can be kept in the fridge (40°F or below) for up to 4 days.

On Thanksgiving, there is no such thing as too many cooks in the kitchen; having family home to prep, cook and bake together is one of the best things about the holiday. However, having so many helping hands increases the chance of spreading germs. Avoid disaster by reviewing these helpful food safety hints with your kitchen crew.

- **Wash hands**, not the bird. According to an FDA [Food Safety Survey](#), 68% of people wash whole turkeys before cooking. However, rather than getting rid of bacteria, the splashing water allows harmful pathogens to contaminate other areas—like sinks and food prepping surfaces—up to three feet away. Banish bacteria by washing hands before and after handling raw poultry, meat or seafood.
- **Know your stuff**. Traditional stuffing is one of the Thanksgiving foods most susceptible to foodborne illness since harmful bacteria can survive in stuffing that does not reach 165°F. Avoid disaster by putting the stuffed bird in an oven, set to 325°F or higher, immediately after preparation and use a food thermometer to ensure the stuffing reaches the safe minimum internal temperature (165 °F).
- Better yet, think outside the turkey. Although dressing—preparing stuffing outside of a turkey—is safer, cooks still need to be aware of potential foodborne illness. If using raw meat, poultry or shellfish in the dish, precook the raw ingredients separately first.
- Cook to the **right temperature**. The only way to determine if meat, poultry or seafood is cooked safely is to check the internal temperature with a food thermometer. Whole turkeys should register 165°F in three locations—the innermost part of the thigh, the innermost part of the wing and the thickest part of the breast.

The best part of Thanksgiving is leftovers! Don't let post-dinner drowsiness get in the way of food safety and packing up remaining food properly.

- Chill out. We mean your food, not you! Refrigerate uneaten food within two hours of cooking to prevent bacteria growth. Stop suggests storing leftovers in shallow containers to decrease cooling time and prevent food from spending too much time at unsafe temperatures (40 °F to 140 °F). **Pro tips**: cut turkey off the bone before refrigerating and store stuffing separately from the meat.
- BYOC (Bring Your Own Cooler). Thanksgiving means refrigerator space is at a premium. Anticipate little to no refrigerator space and bring a cooler from home. Even if you live in a cold climate, do not use the outdoors as a fridge since temperatures can fluctuate. The best way to keep extra food pathogen-free is in a packed cooler at a safe temperature (40°F or below).
- Leftovers last safely for four days in the refrigerator. For those who need a week before eating Thanksgiving again, pack food into airtight containers and freeze.
- **Sending guests home with leftovers**? If they will be traveling for more than two hours, give them ice or frozen gel packs to make sure the food in their coolers stays at or below 40°F.

**Stop Foodborne Illness** is a national nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens by advocating for sound public policies, building public awareness and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness.

- For more food safety tips please visit [www.Stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/](http://www.Stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/).
- If you [think you have been sickened from food](#), contact your local health professional.
- You may subscribe to receive Stop Foodborne Illness e-Alerts and eNews here: [www.Stopfoodborneillness.org/take-action/sign-up-for-e-alerts/](http://www.Stopfoodborneillness.org/take-action/sign-up-for-e-alerts/).

Follow us on **Facebook**: [www.facebook.com/stopfoodborneillness](http://www.facebook.com/stopfoodborneillness).

Follow us on **Twitter**: [www.twitter.com/StopFoodillness](http://www.twitter.com/StopFoodillness).

Follow **Newsline360** for our latest news: [www.newsline360.com/stopfoodborneillness](http://www.newsline360.com/stopfoodborneillness).

(Follow Us icon on upper right corner)

For questions and personal assistance, please contact Stanley Rutledge, Community Coordinator, at [srutledge@Stopfoodborneillness.org](mailto:srutledge@Stopfoodborneillness.org) or 773-269-6555 x7.