



# CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
BUREAU OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



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## PREPARING A SAFE HOLIDAY MEAL

Many people don't realize that food safety is *the* most important ingredient in preparing food for the holidays. Following a few simple food safety guidelines can ensure a delicious *and* safe holiday meal. Here are a few guidelines to keep your holiday festivities healthy:

### HOLIDAY MEAL BASICS

#### ***First Things First-Wash Your Hands and Clean Work Surfaces-***

Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling raw foods, after using the toilet, after changing diapers and after handling pets. Dry hands with a clean, single-use paper towel. People with cuts or skin infections on their hands should not prepare food.

Thoroughly clean all work surfaces, utensils and dishes with hot soapy water, and rinse with warm water before and after each use. Knives, cutting boards and meat grinders should be washed thoroughly before using them for other foods.

## ***Purchasing and Defrosting-***

### *Turkey-*

Whether you purchase a fresh or frozen turkey is a matter of personal preference. Buy a fresh turkey no more than two days ahead of the big meal and make sure you have adequate storage space in the refrigerator.

If a frozen turkey is the choice, you can safely defrost it in the refrigerator, allowing 24 hours for every 5 pounds. Check that the original bag is not broken, to prevent raw juices from coming in contact with other foods.

The turkey can also be thawed in cold (below 75°F) water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. Cook immediately. ***Never defrost on the kitchen counter at room temperature.***

Use the following charts when planning to defrost the bird.

### **Under Refrigeration:**

<b>Size of Turkey</b>	<b>Thawing Time in the Refrigerator</b>
8 to12 pounds	1 to 2 days
12 to16 pounds	2 to 3 days
16 to 20 pounds	3 to 4 days
20 to 24 pounds	4 to 5 days

### **Under Cold Water:**

<b>Size of Turkey</b>	<b>Hours to Defrost</b>
8 to12 pounds	4 to 6 hours
12 to16 pounds	6 to 8 hours
16 to 20 pounds	8 to 10 hours
20 to 24 pounds	10 to 12 hours

## ***Safe cooking-***

For safety and doneness, the internal temperature of the turkey must reach 180° F in the thigh. Take several temperatures, concentrating on the thickest part of the meat. Set the oven temperature to 325° F. Use a meat thermometer to be sure the correct internal temperature is reached and to prevent overcooking. A meat thermometer should be used even in turkeys that have “pop-up” temperature indicators to ensure a safe temperature of 180° F. The meat thermometer must be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized between uses.

**To stuff or not to stuff-**

**The safest way to cook the stuffing is separate from the turkey.** But whether the stuffing is cooked inside or outside of the turkey, it must reach an internal temperature of 165° F. If the turkey is stuffed, mix ingredients just prior to filling the cavity. Stuff loosely to help ensure safe, even cooking. Remember, the turkey must reach 180° F, while the stuffing must cook to at least 165° F.

**APPROXIMATE COOKING TIMES**

<u>Size of Turkey</u>	<u>Cooking Time</u>	<u>Size of Turkey</u>	<u>Cooking Time</u>
<b><i>Unstuffed</i></b>		<b><i>Stuffed</i></b>	
8 to 12 pounds	2.75 to 3 hours	8 to 12 pounds	3 to 3.5 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 to 3.75 hours	12 to 14 pounds	3.5 to 4.0 hours
14 to 18 pounds	3.75 to 4.25 hours	14 to 18 pounds	4 to 4.25 hours
18 to 20 pounds	4.25 to 4.5 hours	18 to 20 pounds	4.25 to 4.75 hours
20 to 24 pounds	4.5 to 5 hours	20 to 24 pounds	4.75 to 5.25 hours

**Safe handling of leftovers-**

Cut leftover turkey into small pieces, or slice into pieces no more than 2.5 inches thick. Refrigerate stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3 to 4 days, and gravy within 1 to 2 days. Gravy should be reheated to a boil and leftovers, if heated, should be thoroughly reheated to 165° F.

Following these simple rules will ensure that you and your guests have a delicious and safe holiday meal. The City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services wishes everyone a safe and healthy holiday meal!