



Custer County Health Department
Creating a State of Health

For Immediate Release
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Keep Foodborne Illness Off the Holiday Menu

The holiday season brings friends, family and lots of good food. From cooking the turkey to homemade pies, it is easy to forget safe food handling practices during the hustle and bustle. Every year, approximately 48 million people become ill with a foodborne illness. The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) reminds everyone to practice food safety when preparing holiday foods.

The OSDH recommends the following food safety tips to prepare a turkey and keep holiday gatherings free of foodborne illness:

- **Clean:** Wash hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before, during and after handling food. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.
- **Separate:** Disease-causing germs can spread from raw food to other foods. Use separate cutting boards, and keep raw meats and their juices away from fruits and vegetables.
- **Cook:** Always check the internal temperature of cooked meat, poultry and egg dishes with a food thermometer to ensure the food is cooked to a safe temperature.
- **Chill:** Be safe with leftovers. Refrigerate leftover foods promptly. When foods are left out unrefrigerated, harmful germs multiply quickly. Discard any food left out more than two hours.
- **Illness:** Anyone who has been sick with diarrhea or vomiting should not prepare food for at least 24 hours after symptoms have stopped.

Tips for Preparing and Reheating Turkey

Thaw: Allow enough time for a frozen turkey to defrost. Incorrectly thawed turkey can look safe to eat but actually will be undercooked, allowing disease-causing germs to survive inside. For more information about how to properly thaw a turkey based on weight and time in the refrigerator, in cold water, or using the microwave, please visit Safe Holiday Cooking at <https://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/Holiday%20Cooking.pdf>

Cook: Use a meat thermometer to ensure the internal temperature of the turkey is at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit. For stuffed turkeys, the internal temperature of the stuffing must reach 165 degrees before it is safe to eat; however, the safest way to cook stuffing is to cook in a separate casserole dish.

Store: After preparing the meal, refrigerate remaining foods and leftover turkey within two hours. Eat leftover turkey, stuffing and gravy within three to four days. Reheat leftover gravy to a rolling boil, and thoroughly reheat other leftovers to 165 degrees.



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For more safe holiday food preparation details, please visit the OSDH Acute Disease Service “Food Safety and Foodborne Diseases” website at <http://ads.health.ok.gov/>

