

## DOES "TRADITION" PUT YOUR FAMILY AT RISK OR FOOD POISONING?

When you look at the faces around your holiday table, think about this...Nearly one in five people you see could face special risk from food poisoning.

**Who?** A lot of people are especially vulnerable to food poisoning. Most of them don't know it. People over 65, pregnant women, infants and people with chronic illnesses all stand a greater chance of getting sick from food poisoning and suffering complications. **But, here's the most important part. You can cut those risks, protecting yourself and your family. Most foodborne illness can be prevented by safe food handling.**

### CHECK OUT YOUR FAMILY TRADITIONS

According to data from the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline, one of the riskiest things people do is something they have been doing for decades - leave the cooked turkey out all day. *"It's on the counter, it's on the table. People pick at it after dinner and there it sits for hours."* Unfortunately, while it's sitting there, bacteria are multiplying, doubling every 20 minutes in the right conditions. *"If just one bacterial cell got on the meat after you pull it out of the oven at 1:00, by 8:00 that evening you could have over 2 million."*

So here's the food safety rule. **Two hours after you pull the cooked bird out of the oven, it should be back in the refrigerator. To speed cooling and limit bacterial growth, cut the meat from the bone, remove the stuffing and store both in small, shallow containers.**

### TURKEY LIKE GRANDMA MADE

*"For as long as we've been having Thanksgivings, we've been looking for ways to save time with the fixings. Sometimes these old time-savers end up costing us more than time."*

### ALL-NIGHT COOKING

Callers have reported, *"Mom's turkey always cooked all night. We'd wake up in the morning to the smell of roasting turkey."* *"Overnight cooking is popular when people are having a lot of guests. A big turkey takes a long time to cook. Rather than get up at the crack of dawn, they cook the turkey all night at a low temperature."* **This practice is not safe.** Thorough cooking kills bacteria. But, cooking at low temperatures (less than 325°F.) has the opposite effect. The warmth of low heat actually helps bacteria grow.



### BUT, HOW DO I GET MY TURKEY COOKED?

There are a couple of good alternatives to overnight cooking. Cook two smaller turkeys, or use a cooking bag or covered roasting pan to speed cooking.

*"Lots of callers to the Hotline get confused about cooking bags."* *"They remember their mother using brown grocery bags. Don't use them for cooking. It's not safe and toxins from the glue in the seams could make you very sick."*

### "EGGSTRA" CAUTIONS



Because of emerging problems with salmonella bacteria in unbroken eggs, people need to take precautions when preparing food made with eggs, especially some desserts, like pumpkin or custard pies made with eggs.

Foods like custard, containing eggs, milk and high moisture content, need to be cooked to 160°F. or until firm. They must also be refrigerated after cooking, a precaution that is not necessary with most cakes, breads or cookies.

**It's also important not to consume raw eggs. Use commercially pasteurized eggnog or make your own eggnog with a cooked custard base.**

#### **FOR SAFE HOLIDAY FOOD**

- **Thawing a frozen turkey** - Don't thaw on the kitchen counter. Thaw in the microwave or refrigerator.
- **Wash hands, utensils, sink and anything else that has contacted raw turkey with hot soapy water.**
- **Snacking** - Snacking off the turkey is fine, but don't leave it out more than 2 hours.
- **Leftovers** - To speed cooling, debone the turkey and refrigerate it in small, shallow containers.
- **Cooking** - Don't cook turkeys overnight at low temperatures. Cook at 325°F.
- **Desserts** - Cook custard to 160°F. and refrigerate pies made with eggs.
- **Eggnog** - Don't use a raw egg recipe. Use commercially prepared, pasteurized eggnog or make your own with cooked custard base.