



# Holiday Cooking

The holiday season is fast approaching. There are decorations to be hung, gifts to buy, and dinners to plan and prepare. In the midst of all this planning and preparing, food safety could easily be overlooked.

Food safety measures that cannot be forgotten include: proper food thawing, food handling, proper cooking temperatures, and storage.

To safely thaw frozen foods properly, frozen food can be placed in the refrigerator until it reaches 41°F, be completely submerged under running water at 71°F (not allowing the food to reach above 41°F), or be thawed in a microwave oven and immediately put in cooking equipment without an interruption. If the temperature of the food is in the range between 42°F and 134°F, bacteria grows at an exponential rate.

Food preparation should include proper handwashing, single glove-use, clean equipment, clean utensils, and clean work surfaces. Bacteria can grow rapidly on work surfaces, hands, and utensils. It is very im-

portant to wash, rinse, and sanitize items after they have been exposed to raw food items.

Cooking food to the proper temperature is essential in ensuring food borne illnesses are prevented. If meat is stuffed, that stuffing needs to reach the same cooking temperature as the meat. If stuffing a turkey, the stuffing should reach a temperature of 165°F. Vegetables shall be cooked to 145°F and precooked foods shall be cooked to 135°F. Temperatures should be obtained internally using properly calibrated thermometers. The thermometer probe shall be inserted in the middle of the product beyond indentation. For question on how to calibrate a thermometer, please contact the Vinton County Health Department.

Below is a list of proper internal cooking temperatures for meats:

Chicken - 165°F

Turkey -165°F

Beef - 155°F

(except whole-muscle, intact beef steak)

Pork - 145°F

Fish - 145°F

Properly cooling and storing of foods is also part of preventing illness during the holiday season. Cooked foods and ready to eat foods shall be stored above raw meats in the refrigerator and freezer. The raw meats need to be stored according to cooking temperatures. This means raw turkey and raw chicken need to be stored below raw beef and the raw beef needs to be stored below the raw fish and pork. Raw foods shall never be stored above pre-cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

Heating leftovers requires the temperature to reach 165 °F within two hours with periodic stirring to obtain even temperatures.

Following the food safety code will help ensure a food-borne illness free holiday.



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## Special points of interest:

- Cook turkey internally to at least 165°F.
- Cool foods properly.
- Use proper food storage in the refrigerator and freezer.

## Cooling leftovers

After all the cooking and hot holding is finished, the cooling process begins, and your clock starts when the food reaches an internal temperature of 135°F.

Once the food reaches 135°F, the food must be cooled to 71°F within 2 hours, and within a total of 6 hours from 135°F to 41°F or less.

This means that if it takes 2 hours to decrease from 135°F to 71°F, there are 4 hours left to decrease from 71°F to 41°F.

Some examples to quickly reach these

temperatures are:

- Place food in shallow pans.
- Separate food into smaller/thinner portions.
- Use rapid cooling equipment.
- Add ice as an ingredient.
- Loosely cover or uncover the food.
- Use containers that transfer heat easily.
- Place the container of food in an ice bath.

Make sure to not store hot foods

in the refrigerator or freezer, as this will heat up surrounding foods and caused the unit to work harder to cool foods to proper temperatures.



## Causes of Food Poisoning

Food poisoning effects millions of people in the United States each year due to bacteria, viruses, parasites, mold, toxins and allergens contaminating the food supply. Symptoms can start immediately if the contaminate is a chemical/natural toxin or allergen. Food



poisoning symptoms may also take days to develop.

The most common cause of a foodborne illness is due to bacteria and viruses. Bacteria, viruses, and parasitic foodborne illness can be transmitted through food by improper handling of foods, improper cooking temperatures, improper storage, and improper hot and cold holding temperatures of

foods.

If at any time a foodborne illness is suspected, contacting or being seen by a physician is recommended. Food borne illnesses must be diagnosed properly by a physician. If a foodborne illness is diagnosed/suspected, or if an employee experiences symptoms, the health department shall be contacted as soon as possible.

## This Just In ...

Food Safety updates can be found through out the multimedia networking world. Below is a list of websites that can be accessed to obtain the most current food safety code, food recalls, food safety practices, and current events in food:

[www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov)

[www.agri.ohio.gov](http://www.agri.ohio.gov)

[www.cdc.gov/foodsafety](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety)

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

[www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)

[www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

The **Vinton County Health Department** also has a website available ([www.vintonohhealth.org](http://www.vintonohhealth.org)) with a printable version of the Ohio Food Safety Code and a temporary

food service application, along with links to the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA).

“Like” us on Facebook to receive periodic updates or if access to a computer is not possible, our office can be contacted at 740-596-0473, Monday through Friday 8:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

