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LET'S TALK TURKEY

A GUIDE TO FOOD SAFETY THIS CHRISTMAS

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We want you to eat, drink and be merry this Christmas, so we've put together some advice to help you plan your festive feast.

Every year, there are an estimated 1 million cases of food poisoning in the UK. Food poisoning can have serious consequences, especially for children, people already in

ill-health and older people. So it's important to protect your loved ones this Christmas by handling food safely when preparing it at home.

'Let's talk turkey' offers advice on the 4Cs of food hygiene: Chilling, Cleaning, Cooking and avoiding Cross-contamination – to help you prevent most forms of food poisoning.



1 BUYING YOUR TURKEY AND FESTIVE FEAST

Avoid cross-contamination when doing your Christmas food shopping – make sure you take enough bags so that you can pack raw and ready-to-eat food separately.



FSA Explains Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination is what happens when bacteria or other microorganisms are unintentionally transferred from one object to another. The most common example is bacterial transfer between raw and cooked food – this is thought to be the cause of most cases of foodborne infections.

For example, when you're preparing raw chicken, bacteria can spread to your chopping board and knife. If you then use the same board and knife to prepare a ready-to-eat product such as bread, this could cause food poisoning.

That's why it's so important that you either use separate knives and chopping boards, or wash them thoroughly between tasks.

2 STORING YOUR TURKEY

Once you get your shopping home, plan your fridge and freezer space effectively. Some foods need to be kept in the fridge to help slow down the growth of germs and keep food fresh and safe for longer.

Tip: Take items that DON'T need to be chilled (such as beer) out of the fridge to make room for the items that DO need to be chilled (like your turkey and trifle).

To prevent cross-contamination, store raw turkey and other raw food (e.g. meat, poultry, fish, shellfish and veg) separately from cooked and ready-to-eat food. Keep them covered and chilled on the bottom shelf of your fridge.

Check regularly that your fridge is cold enough – it should be below 5°C. Generally, the colder the temperature the slower germs will grow, but cold temperatures don't stop germs growing altogether. Consider using a fridge thermometer as a fridge's dials are not usually an indicator of the temperature.

3 DEFROSTING YOUR TURKEY

If your turkey is frozen, make sure you check the guidance on the packaging well in advance to ensure you have enough time to fully defrost it. Defrost it according to its size – a typical large turkey weighing 6-7kg could take as much as 4 days to fully thaw in the fridge. To avoid cross-contamination always defrost your turkey into a container large enough to catch any juices.

Make sure your turkey is fully defrosted before cooking – partially defrosted turkey may not cook evenly, meaning that harmful bacteria could survive the cooking process.

Some turkeys can be cooked from frozen if the manufacturer's instructions say so. (In these cases, follow the manufacturer's advice).

Do not defrost foods at room temperature. Ideally, food should be defrosted fully in the fridge or if this is not possible, using a microwave on the 'defrost setting' directly before cooking.

If there aren't any instructions on the packaging, use the times below to work out roughly how long it will take to fully thaw your turkey:

- **In a fridge** at 4°C (39°F), allow around 10-12 hours per kg (remember that not all fridges will be this temperature).
- **In a cool room** (below 17.5°C, 64°F), allow approximately 3-4 hours per kg, or longer if the room is particularly cold.

FSA Explains The 'Danger Zone'

The FSA advises that the safest way to defrost food is in the fridge overnight. Bacteria will grow at temperatures above 8°C and below 63°C; this is known as the 'Danger Zone' for microbial growth. By defrosting in the fridge, which should ideally be at 5°C or below, the food should never enter the 'Danger Zone'. Some bugs such as listeria monocytogenes can grow at lower temperatures than 8°C.

4 PREPARING YOUR TURKEY

Effective cleaning removes bacteria on hands, equipment and surfaces, helping to stop harmful bacteria from spreading onto food through cross-contamination. These tips will help you keep germs at bay:

- Use different utensils, plates and chopping boards for ready-to-eat food and raw food that requires cooking.
- Wash your hands after touching raw meat and before you handle ready-to-eat food.
- Don't wash raw turkey or any other meat – it just splashes germs onto your hands, clothes, utensils and worktops. Thorough cooking will kill any bacteria present.
- Do not prepare food for others if you have suffered from food poisoning or have an infectious illness.

5 COOKING YOUR TURKEY

Firstly, consider cooking your stuffing in a separate roasting tin. The bird will cook more easily and the cooking guidelines will be more accurate if it isn't stuffed. To cook your stuffing inside the turkey, you'll need to extend the cooking time to ensure that everything is properly cooked.

Cooking food at the right temperature and for the correct length of time will ensure that any harmful bacteria are killed. This is particularly important when cooking turkey, chicken, duck, goose, pork, or any minced products such as kebabs, sausages and burgers.

Always check that:

- The meat is steaming hot throughout
- There is no pink meat visible when you cut into the thickest part
- Meat juices run clear.

FSA Explains Cooking methods

Food cooked in an oven cooks through three heat transfer methods:

- **Radiant or direct heat**, where the flames at the back of a gas oven or the element in an electric oven cook the food.
- **Conduction**, where the heat travels through the shelf, into the baking tray / dish and then into the food.
- **Convection**, where the air within the oven is heated and travels over and through the food (particularly important in fan-assisted ovens – this is why they cook food faster).

If the bird is stuffed, the convection cooking method is severely hampered. That's why the FSA advises that birds be cooked unstuffed, with any stuffing cooked in a separate tray or dish.



HOW LONG WILL A TURKEY TAKE TO COOK?

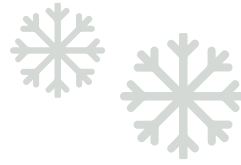
To work out the cooking time for your bird, check the retailer's instructions on the packaging. If there aren't any cooking instructions, here's a cooking guide you can use.

The cooking times below are based on an unstuffed bird. Some ovens, such as fan-assisted ovens, might cook the bird more quickly – check the guidance on the packaging and the manufacturer's handbook for your oven if you can.

As a general guide, in an oven preheated to 180°C (350°F, Gas Mark 4):

- Allow 45 minutes per kg plus 20 minutes for a turkey under 4.5kg
- Allow 40 minutes per kg for a turkey that's between 4.5kg and 6.5kg
- Allow 35 minutes per kg for a turkey weighing more than 6.5kg

Cover your turkey with foil during cooking and uncover for the last 30 minutes to brown the skin. To stop the meat drying out, baste it every hour during cooking.



HOW LONG WILL A DUCK OR GOOSE TAKE TO COOK?

Other birds, such as a goose or a duck, need different cooking times and temperatures.

- **Geese** should be cooked in a preheated oven at 220°C/425°F/Gas Mark 7 for 35 minutes per kg.
- **Ducks** should be cooked in a preheated oven for 45 minutes per kg at 200°C/400°F/Gas Mark 6.
- **Chickens** should be cooked in a preheated oven at 180°C/350°F/Gas Mark 4 for 45 minutes per kg plus 20 minutes extra.

FSA Explains Different cooking times for poultry

We advise that you cook geese and ducks at higher temperatures than chicken. This is in order to help render the fat. Unlike chickens, ducks and geese are waterfowl and have a thick layer of fat under the skin to keep them warm and aid their buoyancy. To remove this, the birds must be cooked at higher temperatures.

USING A TEMPERATURE PROBE

If you're using a temperature probe (used to check internal temperature occasionally), you should ensure that the thickest part of the bird (between the breast and the thigh) reaches a temperature of 70°C for more than 2 minutes, or similar time / temperature combination:

- 60°C for 45 minutes
- 65°C for 10 minutes
- 70°C for 2 minutes
- 75°C for 30 seconds
- 80°C for 6 seconds

Remember to wipe the temperature probe clean after each use to avoid spreading germs.

Time-saving tip:

Cooking your turkey in advance could save you getting stressed out on the day and give you more time with your family and friends. Once your turkey is cooked and cooled, slice and then batch it into portions to store in the freezer. You can then take out and reheat the amount you need when you need it, which is safer and will help to avoid food waste. Remember that meat previously cooked and frozen should only be reheated once.



USING A COOKING THERMOMETER

If you're using a cooking thermometer (which is left in the bird while it cooks), this should be placed in the thickest part of the bird (between the breast and the thigh) from the start. You'll know your bird is cooked when the thermometer has reached a temperature of 70°C for more than 2 minutes.

Some retailers include pop-up timers with their poultry products, which can also be used as an indicator of when the bird is thoroughly cooked. Once the indicator stick (typically red) pops up, this indicates that the bird is thoroughly cooked, though you might also want to double-check this visually. Pop-up timers are easy to read because it's as simple as 'Cooked' or 'Not cooked yet'.



LOVE YOUR LEFTOVERS

Here are our top tips to avoid being wasteful and make your food go further this festive season:

- Cool any leftovers at room temperature, then cover them and ensure that they go in the fridge or freezer within 1-2 hours. If you have a lot of one type of food, splitting it into smaller portions will help it to cool quickly and means you can freeze and defrost only what you need for future dishes.
- You can freeze cooked turkey, other cooked meat and meals made from cooked and frozen meat. But once defrosted, you should eat the food within 24 hours.
- You can use previously cooked and frozen turkey to make a new meal, such as a turkey curry. This new meal can be frozen too, but make sure you only reheat it once.
- When you come to use frozen leftovers, make sure you defrost them thoroughly in the fridge overnight or in a microwave (on the 'defrost setting') and then reheat until steaming hot.
- **Don't forget:** leftovers should be eaten or frozen within 2 days (one day for rice dishes).



FOOD POISONING - GET TO KNOW THE FACTS AND SYMPTOMS

The easiest way to protect the family from nasty 'food bugs' is to store, cook and eat food safely. But in case you or a loved one get caught out, it's a good idea to know what to look out for. Many people mistakenly think that food poisoning is just a passing tummy bug, but it can be really serious. Familiarise yourself with the FSA's guidance so you're in the know.

Food poisoning can be attributed to various bugs including campylobacter, salmonella, listeria and some E. coli.

Campylobacter is the most common cause of food poisoning in the UK. You can't see, smell or even taste it, but it can lead to people being very ill indeed with abdominal pain, diarrhoea, headache and fever. It can even lead to permanent disability. It is usually found in poultry, meat, dairy products, unpasteurised milk and shellfish and can be spread by cross-contamination, contaminated water or infected animals and their food.

Salmonella is another common bug found in raw meat, undercooked poultry and unpasteurised milk. It's most commonly spread by inadequate cooking and cross-contamination, it leads to diarrhoea, fever, vomiting and stomach pains and it can make you ill for up to three weeks.

E. coli is often passed on through raw and undercooked meats, but can also be spread through other contaminated foods, such as vegetables and salads, water or unpasteurised milk and from person to person. Symptoms can include diarrhoea (about 50% of people infected have bloody diarrhoea), stomach cramps and vomiting. The illness usually lasts between



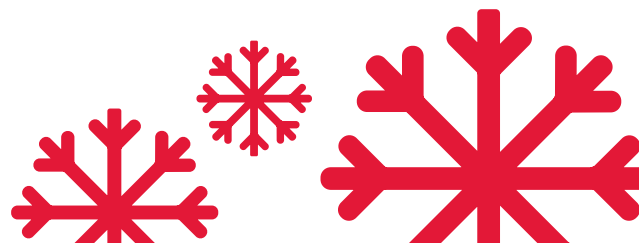
one and five days, although symptoms can persist for up to two weeks. Infection can be more serious in children, particularly those aged 1 to 4 years, when in rarer cases it can lead to haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS), a serious condition affecting the kidneys.

Listeria (*L. monocytogenes*) is less common than campylobacter and salmonella but it has a high hospitalisation and mortality rate. Individuals with an increased risk of listeriosis include those over 65 years of age, very young children and babies less than one month old. Listeria is particularly dangerous for pregnant women and their unborn babies. Listeria causes flu-like symptoms and it is most commonly associated with ready-to-eat foods. Special care should be taken with soft cheeses, smoked fish, meat patés and pre-packed sandwiches.

The symptoms of food poisoning usually begin within a week of eating contaminated food, although they may start at any point between a few hours and several weeks or months later.

The main symptoms include:

- feeling sick (nausea)
- vomiting
- diarrhoea, which may contain blood or mucus
- stomach cramps and tummy pain
- lack of energy and weakness
- loss of appetite
- high temperature
- aching muscles
- chills



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What to do

Most people with food poisoning recover at home and don't need any specific treatment, but we would always advise to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, especially in the very young or elderly. If your symptoms are severe or don't improve after a few days, it's worth visiting your GP or (in England and Wales) contacting NHS 111.

For more information see:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Food-poisoning/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/food-poisoning>

