



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

Dana Olzenak McGuire, PT, PhD ■ Public Health Director
80 State Highway 310, Suite 2 ■ Canton, New York 13617-1476
Phone: (315) 386-2325 ■ Fax: (315) 386-2203

Press Release

Date: 11/15/2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: 315-386-2325

Food Safety Tips for Cooking your Holiday Turkey

Canton, NY— Thanksgiving is a time when many of us prepare the largest turkey dinner we've cooked all year, leaving plenty of room for mistakes that could cause food poisoning. Unsafe handling of food and undercooking of food can lead to serious foodborne illness. The Centers for Disease Control estimates that each year 48 million people get sick from a foodborne illness. In St. Lawrence County, there have been 120 confirmed cases of food or waterborne gastrointestinal illness from January 1st to October 31st 2019.

Turkeys may contain Salmonella and Campylobacter, harmful pathogens that are only destroyed by properly preparing and cooking the turkey. To be sure that everyone prepares a safe and enjoyable holiday meal, the St. Lawrence County Public Health Department is offering a few turkey safety tips:

Tip 1: Safely Thaw Your Turkey! Three safe ways to thaw a turkey are: in container in the refrigerator, in plastic wrap submerged in cold water, and in the microwave. **NEVER** thaw your turkey by leaving it out on the counter. When a turkey is left out at room temperature for more than two hours, bacteria can begin to grow rapidly.

Tip 2: Don't Wash Your Turkey! Washing raw meat and poultry can cause bacteria to spread up to three feet away. Cooking (baking, broiling, boiling, frying, or grilling) meat and poultry to the right temperature (165°F for turkey) kills any bacteria that may be present.

Tip 3: Safely Cook Your Turkey! A whole turkey should be checked with a thermometer in three locations: the innermost part of the thigh, the innermost part of the wing, and the thickest part of the breast. The thermometer should read 165°F in all three of these places.

Tip 4: Safely Prepare Stuffing! If you're one to put stuffing in a turkey, do so **just before** cooking. Use a food thermometer to make sure the stuffing's center reaches 165°F, as bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached 165°F. Wait **20 minutes** before removing the stuffing from the turkey's cavity after removing the turkey from the oven.

Tip 5: Take Care of Leftovers! Refrigerate the turkey and all other leftovers within 2 hours of food coming out of the oven/refrigerator. Leftovers are good in the refrigerator for up to four days.

To learn more about how to safely select, thaw, and prepare a turkey or for general food safety information, please visit FoodSafety.gov or call the Public Health Department at 315-386-2325.

###