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Leigh Cooper

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Food borne illnesses have no place at the table Leigh Cooper

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(Photo: Joe Truskot/The Salinas Californian)

A kitchen often becomes chaotic on Thanksgiving. And, it's easy to cut corners while trying to juggle the preparations for so many delightful dishes. By following a few tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, your family can enjoy a tasty and safe Thanksgiving meal.

1. A Clean Kitchen: Scrub your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling a raw turkey. And wash any utensils and work surfaces the turkey or its juices touch. Always use two cutting boards one for raw meat and one for ready-to-eat foods like

fruits and vegetables.

- 2. A Frozen Turkey: There are three safe ways to defrost Tom.
- Refrigerator: Place the frozen bird in a clean dish and put it in the refrigerator. The turkey needs to defrost 24 hours for every five pounds of whole turkey.
- Sink: Keep Tom in cold water and change the water every 30 minutes. The bird needs to soak 30 minutes for every pound.
- Microwave: Remove all packaging including metal portions and the gizzard bag. Put the bird in a microwave-safe dish so drippings don't ooze everywhere. Defrost the turkey according to your user manual. Always make sure you can fit the turkey in the microwave before going this route.
- 3. To stuff or not to stuff: Dressing cooked separately is safest. But if you prefer stuffing, stuff the cavity of the bird loosely just prior to roasting. You will need 3/4 cup stuffing for every pound of turkey.
- 4. Get the oven hot: Don't ever partially precook a turkey! When you do roast the turkey, set the oven at 325 degrees F at least. Fork out the dough for a meat thermometer to check that the thickest part of the turkey's thigh muscle reaches 180 degrees F. But don't stick the bone! The stuffing should reach 165 degrees F.
- 5. The guests are late: Don't worry keep the turkey in the oven at 200 degrees F with the turkey's temperature above 140 degrees F. You will want to serve the bird while it is hot and get leftovers into the refrigerator within two hours.
- 6. Leftovers The best part: Eat the leftover stuffing within two days. Tom can last four days. On the day after, you could also place individual meal portions of the dinner in disposal aluminum pie dishes. Wrap them tightly with foil, insert them into individual

plastic, ziplock bags, and stack in your freezer for future quick meals.

Leigh Cooper is a UC Santa Cruz science writing program intern at The Salinas Californian. Contact her at goodaycoop@gmail.com.

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