

Holiday Turkey Can Cause Misery If Not Cooked Correctly

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Turkey, and all the good edibles that usually accompany it, is the food that has become most closely identified with the American holiday dinner. As palatable and nutritious as turkey is, however, care must be taken in its preparation and cooking. If it isn't, the family may end up with a bout of illness.

Occasionally, turkeys and certain other fowls are infected with a food poisoning germ (belonging to the Salmonella group of bacteria) that is generally destroyed in the cooking process. In order to destroy these germs, it is necessary to cook the turkey the required length of time at the proper temperature. To lessen this period for any reason or to cook the bird at too low a temperature, is a risky business for the diner.

Underdone Turkey Unsafe

Many individuals have discovered that turkey, or other poultry, slices thinner and easier when underdone. Persons who are served such food, either when eating out or at home, should refuse it.

Food poisoning, due to Salmonella infection, is usually evident in from seven to 72 hours after the eating of food contaminated with these germs and the illness may last as long as ten days. Symptoms include severe diarrhea, vomiting, prostration and abdominal pain. The severity of the attack usually depends upon the degree of contamination and the amount of contaminated food that is eaten.

Since frozen turkeys are often improperly thawed before cooking, some food poisonings or spoilage have resulted from their use whether they come from the home freezer or the market. According to experts in food preparation, there is no safer place to thaw a bird than the cold refrigerator. Freezer wrappers should be removed and the turkey covered with loose waxed paper. Two or three days in the refrigerator are needed to thaw out a large bird (14 pounds and over) but 24 hours are usually enough for one that weighs less than that.

Place Under Cold Water

For speedy thawing, it is recommended that the turkey be placed under cold running water until completely thawed. Never thaw at room temperature or in warm water and never let the bird stand in water—warm or cold.

Advice on stuffing the turkey includes the warning not to prepare the stuffing in advance or stuff the turkey until it is ready to put in the oven. After last-minute preparation, the stuffing should be packed in loosely to permit expansion during the cooking process.

Leftover turkey will keep longer, by the way, if the stuffing is removed from the bird and refrigerated in a separate container. Ready-stuffed turkeys are also on the market and are usually accompanied by cooking directions which should be followed to the letter. If no such guide is included, they should be defrosted and cooked according to the rules already given.

Temperature Chart Given

This chart of oven temperatures, issued by the Poultry and Egg National Board, gives the approximate time to cook chilled stuffed turkeys:

Oven wt. lbs.	Oven temperature	Cooking time (Min. per lb.)
8 to 10	325° F	15 to 20
10 to 14	325° F	25 to 30
14 to 18	300° F	20 to 25
18	300° F	18 to 25
20	300° F	15 to 13

Unstuffed turkeys, or stuffed birds at room temperature, require approximately five minutes per pound less time. Board also reminds the housewife to add three or four pounds to the weight of an eviscerated turkey to get the approximate oven weight of a stuffed bird.

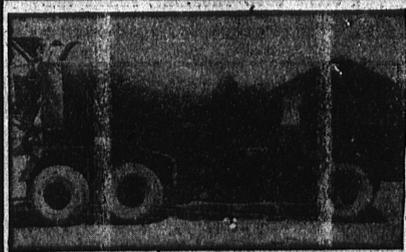
Higher Temperature needed

If the housewife prefers to cook the turkey in aluminum foil, the oven temperature should be higher. For all weights of foil-wrapped turkey oven heat is maintained at 450 degrees Fahrenheit. The safe timetable for this method of cooking is:

Oven weight (pounds)	Cooking time (Min. per lb.)
8 to 9	16
10 to 14	18½
15 to 18	19
19 to 24	8½

All this may sound complicated but the procedure is just as easy as incorrect methods. And, if the turkey is properly prepared and cooked, the pleasure of the holiday dinner will not be spoiled by the aftermath of a distressing illness.

As long as the supply lasts, a booklet containing appetizing recipes utilizing left-over turkey will be mailed to anyone sending a card of request to the Los Angeles County Health Department 241 N. Figueroa St., Los Angeles 12, Calif.



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