

ONEIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Adirondack Bank Building, 4th Floor, 185 Genesee St., Utica, NY 13501

ANTHONY J. PICENTE, JR.
ONEIDA COUNTY EXECUTIVE



PHYLLIS D. ELLIS, BSN, MS, F.A.C.H.E.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DIVISION

Phone: (315) 798-5064 ☎ Fax: (315) 798-6486 ☎ Email: environmentalhealth@ocgov.net

News Release

November 23, 2015
For Immediate Release

Contact: Melanie Adams (315.798.5099)

Oneida County Health Department Provides Safe Cooking Advice for the Holidays

With the Thanksgiving Season already upon us and The Holiday Season fast approaching, the Oneida County Health Department would like to take this opportunity to provide guidance in making food safety the most important ingredient in the holiday kitchen.

The four basic steps of food safety are:

- **Clean** - Wash hands and surfaces often
- **Separate - Don't cross-contaminate.** Keep raw meat and poultry apart from cooked foods.
- **Cook - Cook to safe temperature.** Use a food thermometer to be sure meat and poultry are safely cooked
- **Chill** - Refrigerate or freeze promptly

Specific food safety guidelines for preparing a turkey are:

1. **Thaw your turkey in the fridge.** While you can thaw a frozen turkey under running water or in the microwave, the best way is in the refrigerator overnight (or longer). Be sure to follow the instructions on the package.
2. **Store raw turkey away from ready-to-eat food.** Make sure your raw turkey is covered and stored in a leak-proof container on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. You want to keep it away from foods that are ready to eat, such as desserts and salads, to avoid the risk of cross-contamination.
3. **Clean and sanitize your sink and counters.** After rinsing your raw turkey thoroughly, properly clean and sanitize the sink and surrounding area before starting to prepare any other food.
4. **Cook your turkey to safe internal temperature.** Use a properly calibrated meat thermometer to check that your turkey has reached an internal temperature of 165 degrees. Insert the thermometer to the dimple on the stem in the thickest part of the breast and thigh for accurate readings.
5. **Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.** Prep salads, cranberries and other colds items first and store them in the fridge until ready to serve. Then prep your hot dishes closer to serving time so they stay hot. Keep all food items outside the "temperature danger zone" (41 to 135 degrees) as much as possible.
6. **Safely reheat leftovers.** Whether from a meal prepared at home or picked up from a restaurant, leftovers are part of the holiday tradition. Store each dish separately in clean, sealable, leak-proof containers and reheat to 165 degrees when you're ready to enjoy round two of your Thanksgiving meal.

For more information: <http://www.cdc.gov/features/turkeytime/>

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