

# Countdown to the Thanksgiving Holiday

## Part 2-Cooking, Eating and Leftovers

Once the Turkey is thawed or if you purchased a fresh turkey, prepare your turkey for cooking also rises some serious questions:

### To Wash or Not to Wash... Your Turkey?

Wash your hands, but **NOT** the turkey! Many consumers think that washing their turkey will remove bacteria and make it safer. However, it's virtually impossible to wash bacteria off the bird. Instead, juices that splash during washing can transfer bacteria onto the surfaces of your kitchen, other foods and utensils. This is called cross-contamination, which can make you and your guests very sick. Washing your hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling your turkey and its packaging. Sanitize sinks, utensils, cutting board and other work surfaces with a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water. Be sure to let those areas dry thoroughly.

### To Stuff or Not to Stuff... Your Turkey?

For optimal safety and uniform doneness, cook the stuffing outside the turkey in a casserole dish. However, If you choose to stuff your turkey, do so just before cooking and stuff loosely. The stuffing should be moist, not dry, since heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment. Place stuffed turkey in oven immediately.

### How long should I cook my Turkey?

Set the oven temperature no lower than 325°F and be sure the turkey is completely thawed. Place turkey breast-side up on a flat wire rack in a shallow roasting pan 2 to 2-1/2 inches deep. Judging cooking time for your turkey will be easier if the following chart is used. The times listed are for a fresh or thawed turkey in an oven at 325°F. These times are approximate.

### Timetables for Turkey Roasting

| Cooking Time — Stuffed |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Size of Turkey         | Hours to Cook        |
| 8 to 12 pounds         | 3 to 3 1/2 hours     |
| 12 to 14 pounds        | 3 1/2 to 4 hours     |
| 14 to 18 pounds        | 4 to 4 1/4 hours     |
| 18 to 20 pounds        | 4 1/4 to 4 3/4 hours |
| 20 to 24 pounds        | 4 3/4 to 5 1/4 hours |

(325 °F oven temperature)

| Cooking Time — Unstuffed |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Size of Turkey           | Hours to Cook    |
| 8 to 12 pounds           | 2 3/4 to 3 hours |

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 12 to 14 pounds | 3 to 3 3/4 hours     |
| 14 to 18 pounds | 3 3/4 to 4 1/4 hours |
| 18 to 20 pounds | 4 1/4 to 4 1/2 hours |
| 20 to 24 pounds | 4 1/2 to 5 hours     |



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# **HOCKING COUNTY HEALTH** **DEPARTMENT**

**350 State Route 664 North ~ Logan, Ohio 43138**  
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## **Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey.**

A whole turkey is safe cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F throughout the bird. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. All turkey meat, including any that remains pink, is safe to eat as soon as all parts reach at least 165 °F. The stuffing should reach 165 °F, whether cooked inside the bird or in a separate dish.

When turkey is removed from the oven, let it stand 20 minutes. Remove stuffing and carve turkey.

## **It's Turkey Time! But don't forget-- The Two-Hour Rule**

Thanks giving is a time for families and friends. We give thanks, eat, talk and eat some more, then there are also football games going on and we forget there are tons of food on the table. Keeping track of how long foods have been sitting on the table is also very important. Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours

## **Storing Leftovers**

Cut the turkey into small pieces; refrigerate stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days or freeze these foods. Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165 °F or until hot and steaming.

## **More Questions?**

For more information about food safety, contact the Health Department at 740-385-3030 ext. 2 or visit our website at [www.hockingcountyhealthdepartment.com](http://www.hockingcountyhealthdepartment.com).