

POULTRY: CHICKEN & TURKEY

Each American eats over 65 pounds of chicken per year, making it one of the most popular meat choices on the market. Chicken is affordable and can be cooked many different ways, so many people eat it almost every day. Turkey is also very popular, especially during the holiday season. But both chicken and turkey can harbor *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter* and other dangerous bacteria. Chicken and turkey are among the riskiest foods to have in your kitchen and anything that touches the meat, package, or juices is potentially contaminated with disease-causing bacteria.

Food Preparation

- Plastic bags can keep meat separated from other foods, both in the grocery cart and in the refrigerator, so that contaminated juices don't drip onto other foods.
- Wear disposable plastic gloves when handling raw meat. Whether or not you wear gloves, wash hands often when handling raw meat. Make sure you clean your hands and gloves thoroughly by washing with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- Wash anything that touches the raw poultry or its juices—hands, cutting boards, knives—so that other foods are not contaminated.
- If cooking a whole turkey, you should clear counters of unnecessary items, so you can thoroughly clean-up any spilled juices after the turkey is prepared.
- Do **not** rinse poultry. Bacteria can spread to the sink and other kitchen surfaces.
- Keep raw poultry refrigerated at or below 40 degrees.

Cooking

- Cook all poultry, ground or whole, so that an instant read thermometer says 165 degrees; most people think poultry tastes better if it is cooked to 170 or 180 degrees.
- For whole chicken and turkey, insert the instant read thermometer into the thickest part of the meat, the thigh for the turkey, to measure the temperature. The pop-up timer that comes with the turkey is not as safe as an instant read thermometer.
- Don't use color (pink color of the meat or clear color of juices) or a "feel test" (when the leg moves easily away from the body) to measure whether meat is fully cooked.

After Cooking

- Not ready to sit down to eat yet? Keep cooked poultry in a warming tray or warm oven so that the meat stays above 140 degrees.
- If you plan to allow more than 2 hours between cooking and serving poultry, refrigerate the cooked chicken or turkey and then reheat it to 165 degrees using a thermometer to ensure doneness just before serving.
- If you leave the meat out at room temperature for more than 2 hours, throw it away.
- When refrigerating whole roast chicken or turkey for leftovers, break it into smaller pieces to make sure that it chills quickly.
- You should eat leftover meat, including holiday turkey, within 4 days, then freeze it or throw it away.

Bacteria don't know whether they are at a 5-star restaurant, expensive grocery store, or on a local farm—so practice "defensive eating" every time, no matter where you get your food, to protect yourself and your family.

WHY IS SAFE HANDLING SO IMPORTANT?

Chicken and turkey feathers can carry bacteria from the farm. When the birds are brought to slaughter, the bacteria that are on the feathers of the birds can easily spread and contaminate the meat. Grinding poultry increases the likelihood that the ground meat is contaminated. Although USDA inspects poultry slaughter and processing facilities, it is impossible for them to actually see bacteria.

Chicken Nuggets

Chicken nuggets are generally safe, but not that nutritious. If you are making them:

- Read the label when preparing chicken nuggets, strips, or other processed chicken products, to see whether the product is pre-cooked.
- Always reheat pre-cooked chicken nuggets until an instant read thermometer says 140 degrees.
- Always cook raw chicken nuggets so that an instant read thermometer reads 165 degrees.



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