

Christmas Catering Advice

Environmental Health Officers are warning householders not to take short cuts when cooking their Christmas dinner, or they could end up giving family or friends food poisoning.

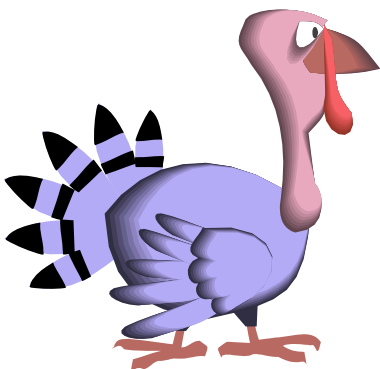
"Failing to do things thoroughly and take all the necessary precautions could be the difference between a good Christmas and a trip to your GP," said David Bardwell, Principal Environmental Health Officer, West Wiltshire District Council.

Preparing and cooking turkeys, chickens and other fowl

If possible, thaw frozen birds in the fridge, but if not, in a cool area. It takes longer in a fridge but it is the safest method, as harmful bacteria can breed at normal room temperature. The fridge temperature should be between 0°C and 5°C - use a fridge thermometer to check and alter settings accordingly. Ensure the bird is thawed in a tray to catch any drips and that it is placed on the lowest shelf to prevent contamination of any high risk food.

Follow the instructions on the wrapping, but as a general guide some examples of thawing times are:

Weight	Thawing in fridge	Thawing in cool area
2lbs/900g	24 hours	
3lbs/1.35kg	30 hours	
4lbs/1.8kg	36 hours	15 hours
7lbs/3.2kg	48 hours	18 hours
13lbs/6kg	60 hours	24 hours
18lbs/8kg	three days	27 hours
20lbs+/9kg+	four days	30/36 hours



Remove giblets from inside the bird as soon as you are able to do so. Check that it has thawed by making sure no ice crystals are inside. Wash the bird inside and out.

Cook stuffing separately or stuff neck end only.

Do not fill the body cavity. Do not stuff large birds at all.

Clean, sterilise or disinfect work surfaces immediately and wash hands. Never prepare cooked meat on an uncleaned surface previously used for raw meat. Store raw and cooked foods separately in fridge with cooked above raw.

Cook for 20 minutes per lb/450g plus 20 minutes

For example:

7lb bird = 7 x 20 minutes plus 20 minutes = 160 mins or 2 hours 40 minutes at 190° C, 375 F or Gas Mark 5.

Ovens vary, so check it is cooked at the end of time by sticking a skewer in thickest part of the thigh. Juices should run clear, not pink.

Once cooled, cooked birds should be stored in the fridge. If reheating, make sure the meat is hot all way through. Do not reheat meat more than once.

Catering from home for large functions

If planning a large party or supplying food for a community event, extra care needs to be taken in the preparation and storage of food. If not, the risk of food poisoning is increased.



- ❖ Don't make food too far in advance.
- ❖ Make sure there is enough space in the fridge or freezer.
- ❖ Enlist help of neighbours or friends to increase capacity.
- ❖ Don't leave food standing for several hours in a warm room.
- ❖ Take special care with vulnerable groups such as young children and the elderly.
- ❖ Proper temperature control is essential.
- ❖ Make sure perishable food such as cold meats, quiches and desserts are kept chilled.
- ❖ Always store cooked food above raw food as the raw food may drip.
- ❖ Make sure food is cooked thoroughly. Large joints and whole birds need special care. If reheating, only do this once and make sure it is hot all the way through.
- ❖ Keep hot food hot, and cold food cold.
- ❖ Don't let raw foods or unwashed fruit, vegetables and salad come into contact with food that is ready to eat.
- ❖ Wash hands before touching foods and after handling raw foods.
- ❖ Take care with eggs. Don't use raw eggs for mousse, icing or mayonnaise.

