



Take precautions if stuffing turkey

I have always stuffed our Thanksgiving turkey with homemade stuffing, but my daughter tells me it's not safe. Should I stop? Would it make a difference if I used stuffing from a box?

Cooking a stuffed turkey is potentially more risky than cooking one without, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) doesn't recommend it.

That said, if you take a few precautions, all should be fine. And whether you make your own stuffing or prepare it from a box, you need to follow the same procedures.

The FSIS offers detailed guidelines at <http://bit.ly/safestuff>. Among its recommendations:

- If you prepare the stuffing ahead of time, store wet and dry ingredients separately; be sure to refrigerate the wet ingredients, including any portion containing ingredients such as butter or margarine, cooked celery and onions, and broth. Combine wet and dry ingredients just before spooning the stuffing into the turkey cavity.

- Stuff the turkey cavity loosely — don't "stuff" it. Have leftover stuffing? Cook it in a separate casserole dish.

- The stuffing should be moist, not dry. Heat kills bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment.

- Once it's stuffed, place the turkey

in an oven set to at least 325 degrees F. Do not stuff turkeys that will be grilled, smoked, fried or microwaved.

- When you check the turkey for doneness, also check the stuffing. Both must reach an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees F. If the turkey is done but the stuffing isn't, keep cooking the whole thing. The turkey meat might dry out a bit, but it's worth being safe.

- When it's done, let everything rest at room temperature for 20 minutes before removing the stuffing and carving.

The FSIS offers numerous other safety recommendations at <http://bit.ly/turkeyprep>. Among them:

- Be sure to thaw the turkey safely; in the refrigerator is best. Allow at least 24 hours for each 4 to 5 pounds. Large birds — 20 to 24 pounds — could take 5 to 6 days to thaw in the refrigerator. Be sure to keep the turkey in its original wrapper and place on a tray to catch any juices. If you've run out of time to thaw the turkey in the refrigerator, see the FSIS website for other options.

- Be sure to refrigerate leftovers promptly — perishable food should be kept at room temperature no longer than two hours. If you're having a large family gathering, it's easy to lose track of time, so be sure to keep an eye on the clock as dinner winds down.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Nov. 9, 2012

By **Martha Filipic**

614-292-9833

filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Linnette Goard, food safety field specialist for Ohio State University Extension.

**Communications and
Technology
News and Marketing**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. *Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension. For Deaf and Hard of Hearing, please contact Ohio State University Extension using your preferred communication (e-mail, relay services, or video relay services). Phone 1-800-750-0750 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. EST Monday through Friday. Inform the operator to dial 614-292-6181.*