

MEDIA ADVISORY

USDA Satellite Features Feed

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Contact: USDA-TV (202) 720-6445 or (202) 720-3319

FEATURE – SAFE AND EASY THANKSGIVING DINNER

INTRO: The U.S. Department of Agriculture is reminding people to prepare well in advance for a safe and healthy Thanksgiving meal. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:50)

THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE IS ENCOURAGING THANKSGIVING COOKS TO PLAN AHEAD. U-S-D-A'S MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE SAYS IF YOU BUY A FROZEN TURKEY TO LEAVE PLENTY OF TIME FOR THAWING.

Diane Van, USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline: A sixteen pound turkey will take three to four days to defrost. So you may need to start defrosting that turkey around Sunday, if you're planning on cooking it on Thursday Thanksgiving Day. It's important to thaw in the refrigerator. Put it on a plate and put it in the refrigerator. Make sure you have enough room in your refrigerator for that turkey to thaw.

IF YOU NEED TO HURRY THE THAWING, SUBMERGE THE TURKEY IN COLD WATER AND ALLOW THIRTY MINUTES FOR EVERY POUND OF TURKEY.

Van: A sixteen pound turkey is going to take about eight hours to defrost in cold water. But the important thing is to remember change the water every thirty minutes and to make sure you cook it immediately after you finish defrosting.

IF YOU PURCHASE A FRESH TURKEY, BUY IT ONE OR TWO DAYS BEFORE COOKING IT. AND AS FOR COOKING IT, USE A FOOD THERMOMETER TO MAKE SURE THE TURKEY REACHES A SAFE INTERNAL TEMPERATURE OF ONE HUNDRED SIXTY FIVE DEGREES FARENHEIT.

Van: When cooking your turkey for Thanksgiving make sure that you're cooking it no lower than three hundred and twenty five degrees. Don't get up in the middle of the night and put it in the oven at two hundred or two hundred and fifty degrees. That's not a high enough or safe enough temperature.

THE SAFEST WAY TO COOK STUFFING IS OUTSIDE THE BIRD.

IF YOU DO DECIDE TO STUFF THE TURKEY, STUFF IT LOOSELY AND MAKE SURE THE STUFFING REACHES ONE HUNDRED SIXTY FIVE DEGREES FARENHEIT. THE FINISHED TURKEY SHOULD SIT OUT NO LONGER THAN TWO HOURS.

REFRIGERATE LEFTOVERS PROMPTLY IN SHALLOW CONTAINERS. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL THE USDA'S MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE AT ONE EIGHT-EIGHT-EIGHT M-P HOTLINE OR GO TO ASK KAREN DOT GOV. FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.