



'Tis the Season to Be Safe: Holiday Dinner Done Right

When planning the perfect holiday meal, make sure food safety is always on the menu. Keep your guests safe and the celebration cheerful by following these essential tips:

- **Keep hot foods hot:** Use a chaffing dish or warmer set at 60°C or above. Check internal food temperatures frequently throughout the event.
- **Keep cold foods cold:** Refrigerate until serving time or place on a bed of ice, replenishing as it melts
- **Watch the clock:** Discard potentially hazardous foods – such as dairy, meat, or cooked rice/pasta - left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours
- **Reheat thoroughly:** Reheat leftovers to an internal temperature of at least 74°C before serving
- **Cool down large batches fast:** Portion into shallow containers then refrigerate once it is no longer steaming hot (no longer than 30 minutes). Food should be cooled from 60°C to 20°C in 2 hours and from 20°C to 4°C in 4 hours.
- **Travel smart:** Transport food in an insulated container such as a cooler with ice or ice packs or a thermal bag
- **Use separate utensils:** Provide separate serving utensils for each dish and ensure the handles aren't touching food items
- **Swap, don't top up:** Instead of refilling, replace a dish that's nearly empty with a fresh one
- **Cover and protect:** Use lids whenever possible and sneeze guards for buffets
- **Encourage hand hygiene:** Provide your guests with hand sanitizer or access to handwashing stations

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Gobble Up Turkey Food Safety Tips

Whether you are cooking turkey for the first time or showing off your secret recipe, follow these food safety tips to ensure your guests enjoy a deliciously safe meal! Safe preparation of raw turkey is crucial to minimize the risk of cross-contamination and protect against foodborne illness.

Storage

- Store in the refrigerator or freezer on the bottom shelf to prevent raw juices from dripping onto other food.

Thawing

There are 3 ways to thaw turkey safely.

- **In the refrigerator:** This is the safest way but also the slowest. Allow 24 hours of thawing time for every 4-5 pounds of turkey.
- **Under cold running water:** Wrap turkey in a leak-proof plastic bag before putting it in the sink to prevent cross-contamination.
- **Microwave:** Refer to your microwave manufacturer's guidelines for thawing times. Cook immediately after thawing.

Handling and Preparation

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling raw turkey.
- Use separate cutting boards – one for raw turkey and another for cooked and ready-to-eat foods like vegetables, fruits, bread, etc.
- Wash cutting boards, utensils, dishes and countertops with hot soapy water immediately after preparing raw turkey.

Cooking

- Cook turkey to an internal temperature of 82°C or 180°F. Use a probe thermometer into the thickest part of the turkey breast or thigh.
- It is safest to cook stuffing outside in a separate oven dish or stove top. If you choose to cook the turkey with stuffing inside, use a probe thermometer to make sure the internal temperature of the stuffing reaches at least 74°C or 165°F.

Leftovers

- Refrigerate leftovers immediately (within 2 hours of cooking max).
- Cut the turkey into smaller pieces and store in shallow containers for fast cooling.
- Reheat all leftovers to at least 74°C or 165°F.

DO NOT...

- **thaw turkey at room temperature**
- **need to wash turkey in the sink**
- **leave your turkey on the dinner table at room temperature for more than 2 hours.**



Serving Up Safety: Train Smart, Serve Safe

Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises requires the presence of at least one certified food handler or supervisor within the food premise, who is onsite during every hour in which the premise is operating (Section 32). A minimum grade of 70% is required on the examination to obtain a certificate. Food handler certificates are valid for a period of 5 years and must be kept up-to-date.

Operators who receive a certificate are required to provide proof that they have successfully completed the food handler training course when requested by a Public Health Inspector (PHI). It is recommended that staff keep a copy of their certificate on-site at a food premise for review by a PHI. Food premises should have more than one certified food handler employed as a back-up for coverage or staff absences. Having more than one certified food handler can help increase food safety awareness and compliance in the food premise.

Food handler training is provided by local Public Health Units or commercial training programs that have been accredited by the Ministry of Health. Operators can complete the food safety training course online or in-person, and in a variety of languages. For a list of approved food handler training courses within Ontario, visit the Ministry of Health website here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/food-handler-training-and-certification>

Whether you're new to the kitchen or a seasoned pro, proper training is the recipe for success. So sharpen those skills, get certified, and keep your food—and your reputation—fresh and flawless.



Pest Patrol: Your Recipe for a Safe Kitchen

Pest control isn't just a good practice -it's the law. Under [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises, Section 13](#), every food establishment must be protected against unwanted critters. That means keeping pests out and eliminating any cozy conditions that might encourage them to settle in. Operators must maintain records of all pest control actions and keep them on-site for at least one year. Persistent or severe pest issues may lead a Public Health Inspector to order you closed until the problem is resolved.

Best Pest Control Practices

- **Seal entry points:** install tight-fitting doors, window screens, and door sweeps to keep rodents and insects out.
- **Maintain sanitation:** clean under and behind equipment, remove waste frequently, and store garbage in sealed containers away from food areas.

- **Monitor regularly:** conduct routine inspections for droppings, gnaw marks, or insect activity, and keep a pest sighting log.
- **Work with professionals:** use a licensed pest control operator to develop an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan.
- **Train staff:** ensure employees understand signs of infestation and reporting procedures.

Keeping a clean, pest-free environment not only keeps you compliant with the law, but it also shows you care about your business reputation and your customers' health. That will keep them coming back for more!



Allergy Canada News

We're pleased to share a new and highly informative video series from Food Allergy Canada titled "Serving the Food Allergic Guest." Available at this link, thinkfoodallergy.ca, these short videos offer practical guidance on managing food allergies across ordering, preparation, and delivery - key areas where your attention to detail makes a real difference. We encourage you to view the videos and to share with your team.

Food allergies remain a significant public health risk. The steps you take to protect your customers - whether through training, communication, or process improvements - are deeply appreciated and make a meaningful impact.



Food Safety YouTube Channel Spotlight + New Special Event Video Alert!

Durham Region Health Department has a dedicated Food Safety YouTube channel with several helpful videos for you to view. Our newest video, Food Safety at Special Events, will guide you on all things you need to know from our Department. Whether you are a coordinator or vendor at a special event in Durham Region, there's lots of great information to view. You can find our food safety playlist here:

[Food Safety YouTube Playlist](#)

Contact Us



durham.ca/foodsafety

Durham Region Health Department
Health Protection Division
101 Consumers Drive
Whitby, Ontario L1N 1C4
Telephone (within regional limits): 311
Telephone: 905-668-2020
Toll-Free: 1-800-841-2729
Fax: 905-666-1887
Email: EHL@durham.ca



Thank You,
Durham Region Health Department

