



To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors

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Thinking about Thanksgiving dinner – safe and delicious! Food safety for the holidays and every day

Today is the Monday before Thanksgiving, but I am not panicking even though I haven't finished shopping nor have I started cooking. I am really looking forward to my holiday dinner during which I will eat much too much while regaling friends and my wonderful fusion family with stories of times past, people we miss, and hopes for the future. We will have turkey and all of the trimmings with a distinctive southern flair since I grew up on the Virginia part of the Delmarva Peninsula.

Hayman potatoes, collard greens cooked with seasoning meat, my grandmother's stuffing, macaroni and really sharp cheese, deviled eggs, creamed onions, corn pudding, scalloped oysters, ice cream, pecan pie, and pumpkin pie flavored with bourbon and spices, are among the many foods vital to the day. As a family of several ethnicities, e.g., southern, northern (Yankee), Filipino, and Latino, to name a few, I am also looking forward to this year's Ponsit, Sinigang, Lumpia, Acaraje, Arroz com Coco, Torta de Banana, and other delightful dishes that will grace our table.

Of course, we have to have a congealed salad; my grandmother never served a holiday dinner without one, and also a second and/or maybe a third kind of meat for the table. Two years ago, I surprised everyone with roast goat. I am not sure what I will settle on this year. Needless to say, while shopping, we will support our local farmers and buy locally grown, locally produced, products for our ingredients where ever we can find them.

During shopping, preparing, and cooking I will adhere to the following guidelines so that I can not only serve a delicious meal, but also serve a safe meal for my family and I urge everyone to follow suit:

At the farm or the market:

- Be sure market is displaying raw and/or cooked food at the proper temperature. Never choose packages, which are torn, or leaking.
- Be sure cashiers and clerks put raw meat and poultry into a plastic bag so meat juices will not cross-contaminate other foods.
- When ordering food from the deli department, be sure the clerk observes good sanitary practices.
- Don't buy cooked items, which are touching raw items in a display case.
- Put refrigerated or frozen items in shopping cart just before going to the checkout counter.
- Ask bagger to put raw foods in bags separate from cooked foods and produce.

On the way home:

- Drive immediately home from the market.
- If you live farther away than 30 minutes, bring a cooler with ice.

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At home:

- **Handling fresh produce** – (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/Ask_Karen/index.asp)
“Before eating or preparing, wash fresh produce under cold running tap water to remove any lingering dirt. This reduces bacteria that may be present. If there is a firm surface, such as on apples or potatoes, the surface can be scrubbed with a brush. Consumers should not wash fruits and vegetables with detergent or soap. These products are not approved or labeled by the Food and Drug Administration for use on foods. You could ingest residues from soap or detergent absorbed on the produce. When preparing fruits and vegetables, cut away any damaged or bruised areas because bacteria that cause illness can thrive in those places. Immediately refrigerate any fresh-cut items such as salad or fruit for best quality and food safety.”

- **Enjoy your turkey** –
 - If you buy a fresh turkey, cook it within one to two days. Don't buy turkey with stuffing already in it; the food safety risk is too great.
 - If you choose a frozen turkey, thaw it in the refrigerator, in cold water, or the microwave. Never let it thaw at room temperature. It takes 24 hours to thaw every five pounds of turkey in the refrigerator, so plan ahead. If using cold water, change the water every half-hour and allow 30 minutes of thaw time for every pound. Follow manufacturer's directions for microwave defrosting.
 - Don't let raw juices from the turkey leak onto other foods. Place the turkey in a leak-proof pan when defrosting.
 - Wash your hands before you handle the raw turkey and often throughout the process. To prepare the turkey for roasting, remove the giblets and neck from the cavity and rinse the cavity in cold, running water.
 - Keep your work area clean. Use paper towels to wipe up raw juices and discard them immediately. Then wipe the work area with a very mild bleach and water solution. Never chop raw vegetables on the same cutting board that just held raw meat without first cleaning the surface with a water/bleach solution.
 - Food safety experts recommend cooking the stuffing in a separate pan. If you prefer to stuff the bird, do so loosely just before roasting. When preparing the stuffing, mix the dry and wet ingredients just before cooking.
 - Use a thermometer to make sure the turkey reaches an internal temperature of 180 degrees F, or 170 degrees F for turkey breast only. Stuffing must also reach 165 degrees F. Don't rely on the "pop-up" thermometers inserted in some brands of turkey.
 - Insert thermometer in the fleshy part of the thigh or breast. If the thermometer touches bone, you will not get a true temperature reading.
 - The safest and most delicious way to cook a turkey is to roast it in a 325 degree F oven, allowing approximately 20 minutes for every pound. Don't cover with aluminum foil, except at the end of the roasting period.

- **Having other meats with your turkey?**
 - Follow the same safe handling instructions given for turkey above for other fresh meats regarding thawing, raw juices, hand washing, and work area cleanliness.
 - Following are some USDA Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) recommended cooking times and temperatures and storage times for **beef, lamb, bison, and goat**. An excellent reference source for safely cooking meats (cooking temperatures, etc.) and other foods is: (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/Ask_Karen/index.asp).

Finally, enjoy!

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