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## What's on a Turkey Label?



Photo: USDA Flickr

Are you shopping for your holiday meal? Choosing a turkey can be the most important item on the menu. Here's some label definitions to help pick the best turkey for you from [farm to table](#).

- **Basted or Self-basted**—These are injected or marinated with a fat solution containing broth, stock, water, spices, flavor enhancers or other ingredients. These ingredients must be listed on the label.
- **Free Range or Free Roaming**—The birds must have access to the out-of-doors for at least 51% of their lives.
- **Fresh**—Stored at a temperature no lower than 26°F.
- **Frozen**—Stored at 0°F or below.
- **Hen or Tom**—Designates sex and size only, no indication of tenderness.
- **Organic**—Must meet requirements of the National Organic Program for the farm and how the poultry was fed and raised.
- **Hormones**—They are not approved for use in turkeys.
- **Free Range or Free Roaming**—Producers must show that the poultry has been allowed access to the outdoors.

## Have a Healthy Holiday Season!

Take these steps to be safe and healthy during the holidays.

**Wash hands often to help prevent the spread of germs.** It's flu season. Wash your hands with soap and clean run-

ning water for at least 20 seconds.

**Eat healthy, stay active.** Eat fruits and vegetables which pack nutrients and help lower the risk for certain diseases. Limit your portion sizes

and foods high in fat, salt, and sugar. Also, be active for at least 2½ hours a week and help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.

Get inspired with [12 Ways to Have a Healthy Holiday Season](#).

## Start Planning for Holiday Meals

It's almost that time of year for holiday parties and meals with family and friends.

Turkey is the star of many holiday meals. For tips on buying, preparing, serving and more with turkey, see [Turkey Basics: Safe Cooking](#) at from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Are you cooking for a large family reunion? Or

are you volunteering to serve a holiday community meal? Information about [Quantity Food Preparation](#) on the K-State Extension Food Safety website can help you plan and serve a safe meal.

Don't panic! Good planning helps you from hitting the panic button. The [USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline](#) receives many questions about

holiday food safety. Reduce your fears of food safety by contacting them at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov).



Learn more about [Holiday Food Safety](#) from K-State Research and Extension

▼  
**Power outages and other disasters can happen any time of year. See [Disasters and Power Outages at K-State Research and Extension Food Safety website](#).**

## Can You Store Food in the Snow?

While storing food outside in the snow may work in a pinch, long term storage is not advised.

Placing food in the snow will not necessarily protect it. Frozen food can thaw when exposed to

the sun's rays even when the temperature is very cold. Food may become too warm and foodborne bacteria could grow. The outside temperature can vary hour by hour and the temperature outside will not protect refriger-

ated and frozen food. Additionally, perishable items could be exposed to unsanitary conditions or to animals. Animals may harbor bacteria or disease; never consume food that has come in contact with an animal.

## Healthy Holiday Cooking

Holiday party planning is in full gear to celebrate with family and friends. But all the tasty goodies can add more fat and sugar to your diet plan. With planning and simple ingredient swaps, you can still have tasty treats.

Instead of a sweet potato casserole, try roasting sweet potatoes with other root vegetables to reduce fat, sugar and calories. Replace sugar in sweet potato casseroles with some 100% orange juice to add flavor and reduce sugar content.

Do you struggle making pie crust? Make a crustless pumpkin pie or an apple crisp instead. It saves you time and reduces the fat content without a crust.

Get more ideas in [Focus on the "Stars": Cooking Healthy for the Holidays](#) from K-State Research and Extension.



Recipes featured in this fact sheet can be found in the [Leader's Guide](#).

Photo: Canva.com

## Freezing Yeast Dough



**Bread dough**  
Photo: Colorado State University Extension

To save time during the holidays, or any time of year, prepare yeast dough ahead of time and freeze into dough balls for rolls to bake later. The trick is using a dough with extra yeast because slow freezing can damage yeast.

According to Fleischmann's Yeast, it is best to use dough recipes developed for freezing. These recipes are high in yeast and sugar and low in salt. It is recommended to use bread flour to help maintain bread structure. After preparing and kneading the dough, shape into rolls or flatten into a disk and wrap airtight. The dough can be frozen up to four weeks. When ready to use, thaw at room temperature or slowly in the refrigerator. Once thawed, shape, let rise, and bake as directed.

Some examples of freezer dough recipes include:

<https://www.fleischmannsyeast.com/recipe/freezer-pizza-dough/>

<https://www.fleischmannsyeast.com/recipe/master-bread-dough/>



## More Ways to Cook a Turkey

Most homes have one oven. That reduces space for cooking multiple dishes for holiday meals.

During the holidays, try using another method for cooking the turkey. Outdoor methods include a

grill or smoker, deep fat turkey fryer, and the "Big Green Egg." Indoor options include an electric roaster or even the microwave.

No matter which method you choose to get your

turkey to the table, have a food thermometer handy so you can make sure the turkey has reached the safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F. Let the turkey stand for 20 minutes before carving.

**Learn more about details and timing when using [other cooking methods](#) for turkey.**



Learn more with these [Holiday Food Safety Resources](#)

## Roasting Two Turkeys at Once or one BIG Bird

The cooking time is determined by the weight of one bird—not the combined weight. Use the weight of the smaller bird to determine cooking time. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the smaller bird first and then check the second bird. A whole turkey is safe when cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F as measured with a food thermometer. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. When cooking two turkeys at the same time make sure there is enough oven space for proper heat circulation.

To cook a large turkey use the Timetables for Turkey Roasting for an unstuffed turkey which can be found in [Turkey Basics: Safe Cooking](#). Add 10 minutes per pound for turkeys over 24 pounds. Do not stuff a turkey over 24 pounds. Use a heavy pan large enough to hold the turkey. Be sure there is enough space in the oven for proper heat circulation.



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# Planning for a Power Outage



**Keep an appliance thermometer in the refrigerator and freezer.**

A power outage can happen at any time, not just during bad weather. With winter approaching, use these tips to help minimize food safety risks and food loss.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has more information and social media graphics to share.

## Eat Safe Food after a Power Outage

Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after the loss of power. Find out what you can do to keep food safe during a power outage, and when you need to throw away food that could make you sick.

**Before**

Keep appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer. The refrigerator should be at 40°F or below. The freezer should be at 0°F or below.

Prepare for emergencies or natural disasters

Freeze containers of water and gel packs to help keep your food at 40°F or below.

Have a cooler handy.

Buy dry ice or block ice to keep food cold in the refrigerator if the power might be out for a long time.

**During**

**KEEP Refrigerator & Freezer Doors CLOSED**

4 Hours in a Refrigerator

48 Hours in a FULL Freezer

24 Hours in a HALF-FULL Freezer

After 4 hours without power, put refrigerated perishable foods in a cooler. Add ice or another cold source to keep them at 40°F or below.

**After**

Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. **When in doubt, throw it out.**

- Throw out perishable food in your refrigerator (meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, and leftovers) after 4 hours without power or a cold source.
- Throw out any food with an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- Check temperatures of food kept in coolers or your refrigerator with a cold source. Throw out food above 40°F.
- If you have an appliance thermometer in your freezer, check to see if it is still at 40°F or below.
- You can safely refreeze or cook thawed frozen food that still contains ice crystals or is at 40°F or below.

www.cdc.gov/foodsafety



Karen Blakeslee, M.S.



On the Web at  
[www.rrc.ksu.edu](http://www.rrc.ksu.edu)



# Mailing Food Gifts Safely

Receiving food gifts can be a treat during the holidays. But not if they are not safe to eat.

Many food businesses ship food, including perishable food, and should be done overnight if possible. These foods must

be kept cold. If there is any evidence of tampering, the temperature of the food is above 40°F, or anything else suspicious, do not consume and contact the company.

Shipping food yourself? Use a sturdy box, frozen gel pack or dry ice, label clearly, and be sure to notify the recipient it is on the way.

Many other tips can be found at [Mail Order Food Safety](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

