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Keys To Safe Thanksgiving Meal Preparation

As Thanksgiving approaches the OKC-County Health Department reminds those who prepare the holiday meal to follow four simple rules: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.

- 1. Clean:** The first rule of safe food preparation in the home is to keep everything clean. Starting with the hands. Wash them with warm water and soap before and after handling any food for 20 seconds. Wash food-contact surfaces like cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next item. Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- 2. Separate:** Keep raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked. Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked and another for those that will not such as raw vegetables and fruits. Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as meat, poultry or seafood.
- 3. Cook:** Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry and fish are cooked to a safe internal temperature. The turkey is safe when the temperature reaches 165 degrees. If the turkey is stuffed then the temperature of the stuffing should be 165 degrees. Cook sauces and gravies to a boil. Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm.
- 4. Chill:** Refrigerate foods quickly because harmful bacteria grows rapidly at room temperature. Leftovers and takeout should be refrigerated within two hours. That includes pumpkin pie. Never defrost food at room temperature. Foods can be defrosted safely in the refrigerator, under cold running water or in the microwave. Leftovers should be used within three to four days.

For more information go to <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/types/turkey/>

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