

Gloucester City Council

Environmental Health Factsheet



CHRISTMAS CATERING

The Christmas rush is once again with us. There is a need for extra care with food handling and hygiene at this particularly busy time. As Christmas approaches functions are being arranged which will involve the preparation of food for many people and the cooking of large turkeys. Very often this involves a great increase in the throughput of a small kitchen.

Salmonella food poisoning continues to infect more than 30,000 people every year and is frequently associated with fresh and frozen poultry. Many outbreaks have been traced to:-

- undercooking
- inadequate re-heating
- poor storage
- cross-contamination after cooking

This leaflet outlines some of the problems that occur and suggests ways in which you can reduce the risk of food poisoning.

A frequent cause of food poisoning outbreaks is that poultry continues to be infected with **salmonella**. Frozen or fresh **turkeys** and **chickens** should be treated as if they are a source of **salmonella** in your kitchen.

For a trouble-free party season I recommend the following precautions:-

- ◆ Use the smallest possible turkeys - preferably not larger than 20lbs/9kg
- ◆ Always allow sufficient time for complete thawing when using frozen turkeys
- ◆ Remove the bird completely from its wrapper and put it in a cool place until **completely** thawed
- ◆ Check the legs for flexibility and inside the body cavity for freedom from ice crystals before cooking



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Gloucester City Council
Herbert Warehouse
The Docks
Gloucester GL1 2EQ

Tel 01452 396396 Fax 01452 396340
Email enviro@gloucester.gov.uk
Minicom 01452 396161
www.gloucester.gov.uk



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Follow this thawing and cooking guide:

OVEN READY WEIGHT	THAWING TIME AT ROOM TEMPERATURE	MINIMUM COOKING TIMES AT 180°C (350°C) GAS MARK 4 IN PREHEATED OVEN
5 lb/2.25kg	15 hours	2½ hours
10 lb/4.5kg	18 hours	3½ hours
15 lb/6.75kg	24 hours	4¾ hours
20 lb/9.0kg	30 hours	5¾ hours

THESE ARE MINIMUM TIMES; the turkey is cooked when the juices run clear. All the meat should have reached at least 75°C - CHECK IT!! - If you have a meat thermometer then use it!

- ◆ Wherever possible arrange working schedules so that turkeys are cooked immediately before a function
- ◆ To achieve the most thorough cooking of turkeys do not stuff or truss the bird
- ◆ Make sure that food handlers wash their hands thoroughly before carving the cooked turkey
- ◆ Use a food grade sanitiser to clean and disinfect food contact surfaces after each use
- ◆ When carving the cooked turkey meat **it must not come into contact with surfaces, knives or utensils which have been used for raw meat or poultry**
- ◆ Use clean cutting boards and knives

IF RE-HEATING IS UNAVOIDABLE THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE MUST BE FOLLOWED:

- * Cook and carve as recommended above
- * Cool the turkey in a cool larder or cold-room for **not more than 1½ hours**. Never leave it to “cool” in a warm kitchen
- * Wash hands thoroughly before handling the cooled turkey meat
- * When the turkey has been carved and portioned **refrigerate it immediately at 5°C or below** until the time to re-heat it for serving
- * When re-cooking any meat or poultry **pre-heat the oven** to the required temperature and cook for long enough to achieve a temperature of 75°C - CHECK AGAIN
- * If you use a microwave oven for re-heating ALWAYS be sure that the **whole portion** is properly re-cooked to 75°C.
- * NEVER ATTEMPT TO RE-HEAT A WHOLE BIRD
- * NEVER RE-HEAT TURKEY MEAT MORE THAN ONCE

Other factors involved in ensuring good food safety and hygiene are covered by other environmental health factsheets which are available from the Food Safety Team.