

Cooking Ease

Thermy™ Says: For Food Safety Use A Food Thermometer

(NAPS)—No matter how you slice it, holiday meats will be done more safely and turn out better if cooks use a food thermometer while preparing them.

Using a food thermometer, according to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), is the only way to tell your food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy harmful bacteria and is safe to eat.

Unfortunately, not all cooks use thermometers. Consequently, thousands of Americans are at risk of falling victim to foodborne illness every year.

The FSIS has created "Thermy™," a messenger to help educate cooks on food safety. "We are using Thermy™ to encourage consumers to use food thermometers throughout the year, but it is especially important at holiday time," says Susan Conley, director of Food Safety Education at FSIS.

Thermy's™ message is "It's Safe to Bite When the Temperature is Right!" That means if food has reached a high enough temperature to kill bacteria, it is safe to eat. "In addition," says Conley, "food tends to be tastier and juicier when it is not overcooked."

If a golden brown turkey will be at the centerpiece of a holiday table, a food thermometer should be used to be certain that the whole turkey reaches an internal temperature of at least 180 °F. The thermometer should be placed in the thickest part of the thigh, between the leg and the breast. If cooking only the turkey breast, it should reach 170 °F in the thickest part of the breast.

For safety and quality, it's best not to stuff turkey but to bake the



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stuffing in a casserole until it reaches 165 °F. However, if the turkey is stuffed, a food thermometer must be used to determine the temperature of the stuffing. Even if the thigh has reached 180 °F, cooking must continue until the center of the stuffing has reached 165 °F.

Beef, veal, and lamb roasts can be cooked medium rare (145 °F), medium (160 °F) or well done (170 °F). If fully cooked hams are reheated, a food thermometer should be used to be sure the thickest part has reached 140 °F.

Fresh game meats should reach 160 °F throughout to kill foodborne bacteria and parasites.

Cornish hens, ducks, geese, capons, and other chicken should be cooked to the same temperature as turkey: 180 °F in the thigh of whole birds, 170 °F if roasting only breast meat.

For food safety information about meat, poultry, or eggs, call the toll free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555 or TTY 1-800-256-7072. The Hotline is staffed by food safety specialists weekdays from 10 am until 4 pm Eastern Time, year round.

Additionally, cooks can visit www.fsis.usda.gov/thermy.