Thawing a Turkey,
And other Fall tips!

Pender County Cooperative Extension

While preparing Thanksgiving dinner:
- Make sure to wash hands frequently (especially after touching raw meat.)
- Don’t thaw food on the kitchen counter.
- Avoid cross contamination, it is very important to clean as you go!
- Don’t over pack the refrigerator, the cool air needs room to circulate.
- Don’t eat raw cookie dough or brownie batter.
- If it falls on the floor, throw it away!

Take these steps when preparing your turkey for your fall meal!
- Thaw the frozen turkey in the refrigerator.
- Allow one day for each five pounds of turkey.
- A twenty-pound turkey will take about four days to thaw.
- Hint: Remove neck & giblets from inside the bird as soon as possible to hasten thawing.
- Do not thaw on the kitchen counter.
- If you do not have time to thaw in the refrigerator, you may thaw it in cold water, provided that the turkey is in a leak-proof packaging, it is submerged, and the water is changed every half-hour.
- Allow 30 minutes per pound of turkey to thaw in cold water.
- Cook fresh turkeys within two days, thawed ones within four days.
- Wash your hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling raw poultry.
- Wash all knives, cutting boards and utensils also after using for raw poultry.
- Read and follow the cooking directions on the label. Cook turkey until it is done (165°F).
- Do not slow cook overnight at low temperatures or partially cook.
- Some turkeys come with pop-up thermometers. They are to be used only as a guide to doneness.
- Take the temperature with a meat thermometer to be sure the temperature is over 165°F in addition to the pop-up.
- Stuffing should not be prepared a day ahead and the turkey should not be stuffed until ready to cook.
- A quicker, safer method is to cook the stuffing separately in a casserole, using some of the pan juices to flavor and moisten the stuffing.
- Eat the meal as soon as it is prepared.
- Do not leave leftovers out on the counter or table after dinner.
- Cut the meat off the bones and put it in shallow containers in the refrigerator.
- Reheat all leftovers to 165°F. (Use your meat thermometer.) Gravy should be brought to a rolling boil.
- If using a turkey fryer, make sure it is a reasonable distance from the house (10 feet,) and not under a carport or tree.
- Do not use a turkey fryer on a wooden deck, if at all possible set it up on concrete.
- Never leave a turkey fryer unattended.
- Keep a candy or fryer thermometer in the oil of a turkey fryer
- Read oil container to find out smoke point of the oil you are using, if your fryer gets that hot, it could explode!

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