



A Thanksgiving Food Safety Quiz

By Linda F. Golodner

Preparing a Thanksgiving feast is really an exercise in project management. Whether you are “sub-contracting” the *sides* or coordinating everything from “soup to nuts” yourself, an awareness of food safety is essential to reach the goal of a delicious, *safely prepared* meal. Take the quiz below to test your knowledge of food safety for the big day ahead.



True or False:

1. The top shelf of the refrigerator is the worst place to store a raw turkey until it is time to be cooked.

True. Store Tom Turkey “as low as he can go” in the fridge; that is, on the lowest shelf possible. The goal is to prevent raw turkey juices from dripping down and contaminating foods stored on lower shelves. Keep Tom well-wrapped in plastic and on a tray large enough to catch all raw juices.

Wondering how long your leftover holiday food will last once refrigerated or frozen? Consult this handy [Foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov) chart.

2. It is not necessary to wash fruits and vegetables that will be peeled.

False. During food preparation it is best to wash all fruits and vegetables using cold, running water. Remember that as you peel and slice, bacteria from outer skins can be transferred to the insides of produce via your knife or peeler. This is especially important when preparing vegetables that will not be cooked, such as raw fruit and vegetable platters.

3. It is essential to rinse a raw turkey with cold, running water before preparing it for the oven.

False. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture ([USDA](https://www.usda.gov)), rinsing a raw turkey in the kitchen sink can generate a fine spray of germ-contaminated water that settles on surrounding surfaces up to three feet away, including countertops, other food, kitchen towels and you! Skip this rinsing step to avoid showering yourself and your kitchen with Tom Turkey’s germs! They will be destroyed in the cooking process.

4. Cutting boards used for raw fruits and vegetables should not be reused for raw meats, poultry and fish.

True. In the busy holiday kitchen, it's best to designate a separate cutting board for raw vegetables and one for raw meats, poultry and fish. That will help reduce the risk of cross-contamination. Between uses, [USDA](#) recommends washing your cutting board with hot, soapy water, then sanitizing it with a dilute chlorine bleach solution made by mixing ½ tablespoon of bleach with ½ gallon of clean water.

5. Foods can remain on the dinner table for 3-4 hours before being refrigerated for future consumption.

False. Time flies when you are having fun, but don't lose track of the time your dinner sits on the Thanksgiving table. Leftovers will be safe for Black Friday and a bit beyond if you refrigerate them no longer than two hours after placing them on the table, according to the [USDA](#). And it is not necessary to cool down hot dishes before refrigerating or freezing them. Maintain the refrigerator temperature at 40 degrees F or below, and the freezer temperature at 0 degrees F or below.

6. You can always tell when food has spoiled because it will have an "off" odor.

False. While an off-odor probably indicates food spoilage, sniffing is not a fail-safe test of freshness, according to [USDA](#). Some foods may be contaminated with bacteria and not smell "off." Follow basic food safety principles: abide by expiration dates; separate and store foods properly, refrigerating when required; cook to recommended temperatures; and don't take chances: when in doubt, throw it out!

7. Washing your hands frequently helps avoid your becoming an agent of cross-contamination in your own kitchen.

True. As you dash around your holiday kitchen, stay mindful of the fact that your hands can become a vehicle for foodborne germs to transfer from one surface to another. Wash your hands for 20 seconds using warm water and soap between kitchen tasks, but especially after contacting raw foods or using the bathroom. Children often eagerly help prepare and serve food at Thanksgiving; make sure they know how important it is to wash their hands thoroughly before and after helping.

Lastly, remember that disposable gloves can be sanitary and useful, but they too can transfer germs from one surface to another, so they should be changed between tasks.

Have a delicious, safe and fabulous Thanksgiving!

The 4 C's of Sink Safety

Keep fats, oils and grease (FOG) from going down your kitchen sink drain and damaging plumbing. Who wants to call a plumber on Thanksgiving? [DC Water](#) advises:

- ✓ Cool: After cooking, allow grease to cool and solidify in the pan.
- ✓ Contain: Scrape FOG and excess food scraps into a secure, sealable container, like a peanut butter jar. Before washing the pan, wipe down with a paper towel.
- ✓ Can: Throw the full container of FOG and your paper towel into a trashcan.
- ✓ Compost: If possible, compost food and vegetable scraps (don't compost grease).

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