

# Tips for safe holiday meal preparation

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If you're going to prepare fruits or vegetables as you cook your holiday meals, be sure to wash them. Make sure you cook your turkey at the right temperature. Don't eat raw dough. And try to get as much information as you can from many media sources about preparing your holiday meal. These are all holiday food preparation safety tips from UF/IFAS professor Amy Simonne, a food safety specialist. Credit: University of Florida

With the holidays approaching, you want the turkey and stuffing – or whatever you're preparing – to be safe to eat, and consume again as leftovers. To help you, a University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences food expert gives tips to make your culinary delights safe.

Amy Simonne, a professor in family, youth and community sciences at UF/IFAS and a nationally recognized [food](#) safety expert, says you should keep in mind many food-safety tips, including the following:

- The safe internal temperature for turkey and other poultry is 165°.
- Cook stuffing and turkey separately.
- Understand that while you may get cooking advice from television, you should research multiple sources for these tips to ensure you get all the accurate information you need.
- Avoid eating raw dough. Simonne also advises against washing any raw meat or turkey. "It is not recommended because it causes more contamination in your kitchen," she said. "Minimize handling those products in the kitchen before cooking."

In addition to her advice as a UF/IFAS Extension specialist, Simonne recently co-authored a study with Joy Rumble, a UF/IFAS assistant professor in agricultural education and communication, in which they surveyed more than 500 Floridians.

They found that people tend to learn food preparation from their parents. Therefore, the researchers concluded, incorrect information about food safety often gets passed down from generation to generation.

To help increase everyone's knowledge about how to safely prepare food – for the holidays or any time of year – the UF/IFAS researchers suggest teaching [food safety](#) through more use of interactive and online teaching

as well as social media. Other tips from UF/IFAS Extension documents include:

- Clean your hands and places on which you'll place food.
- Cook foods to correct minimum safe temperatures
- Separate foods that will not be cooked from those that can contaminate other foods such as raw eggs, meat, poultry or seafood.
- Refrigerate leftovers and any food product stored cold within two hours because harmful bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature.

Provided by University of Florida

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