

Lesson Plan 3: Safe Handling and Preparation of Poultry

The first page is for the instructor to reproduce and distribute. The second page is a true/false quiz on the material, and the final page is an answer key.

USDA's Guide for Safely Handling and Preparing Poultry

Before You Cook:

1. Wash hands, cutting board, utensils, and work surface with hot, soapy water before and after handling raw and cooked poultry.
2. Whole turkeys and chickens will be safe no matter how long they are stored in the freezer. However, they maintain their best quality in the freezer for up to 1 year; after that quality will diminish.
3. Keep raw poultry in the refrigerator at 40 °F or below. Either cook it within 1 to 2 days or freeze it.
4. Thaw poultry on a plate or shallow container in the refrigerator, or thaw in cold water, changing the cold water every 30 minutes. It is safe to thaw in the microwave, however, the poultry should be cooked immediately after thawing.
5. An unstuffed turkey or chicken takes less time to cook than one that is stuffed. Stuffing can be cooked separately, such as in a greased, covered casserole during the last hour while the turkey roasts, until a food thermometer inserted into the stuffing registers 165 °F.
6. If you prefer to stuff the bird, do it just before cooking. Individual stuffing ingredients can be readied ahead of time, but the dry ingredients should only be mixed with the other ingredients just before stuffing the bird. Let the bird stand for 20 minutes before removing the stuffing. Serve and store leftovers separately in the refrigerator.

When Cooking:

1. Use a clean thermometer that measures the internal temperature of cooked foods to make sure that poultry is cooked to a safe internal temperature throughout.
2. If cooking a whole bird, cook until the food thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 180 °F. If cooking poultry breasts, cook until the temperature on the thermometer registers 170 °F. If the stuffing is cooked inside the bird, the stuffing should register 165 °F.
3. Always completely cook poultry at one time; never partially cook at one time and finish cooking at a later time, because this will promote bacterial growth.
4. Put cooked poultry on a clean plate, never on a plate that held raw poultry and hasn't yet been thoroughly washed.
5. When serving poultry, never leave it out of the refrigerator more than 2 hours.
6. Keep cooked poultry in the refrigerator. Use it within 3 – 4 days or freeze it.

Are you an expert on handling and preparing poultry? Take this quiz to find out.

1. _____ The refrigerator temperature should be no more than 60 °F to keep poultry cold enough to prevent bacterial growth.
2. _____ Poultry should always be cooked thoroughly at one time, rather than splitting up the cooking process.
3. _____ It is okay for poultry to sit out at room temperature for a whole day after it has been cooked.
4. _____ Raw and cooked poultry can be put on the same plate at the same time.
5. _____ You should always use a meat thermometer when cooking poultry.
6. _____ Poultry should never be put in the freezer after it is cooked.

Answer key:

1. FALSE: The refrigerator temperature should be 40 °F or below.
2. TRUE
3. FALSE: Poultry should never sit out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
4. FALSE: Never put cooked poultry on a plate with raw poultry. Keep raw and cooked poultry on separate plates.
5. TRUE
6. FALSE: Both raw and cooked poultry can be frozen.