

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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Since today is Thanksgiving Day, I thought I'd share some common questions that come in about today's big meal. If you have others, feel free to contact me next week or any time in the future.

One of the more frequent, desperate calls is "The turkey's still frozen! How can I defrost it?" It usually takes longer than we expect for the bird to thaw out, especially now that they are often injected with added water for flavor. You have 2 safe options to quickly thaw a turkey. If you are going to put it directly into a hot oven to roast, you can use the microwave. Set the power to 'Thaw', rotate it and check it every few minutes until it's soft. But do not thaw it in the microwave then put it back in the refrigerator! The warm spots from the microwaving will be great places for bacteria to grow quickly.

The other safe option is under cold running water. If the sink is otherwise occupied you can put the bird in a large cooler that has a drain plug. Leave the plug open, and set the cooler in the bathtub or out on the porch. Leave the tap open in the tub or a hose running into the cooler on the porch. Adjust the water flow so that the turkey is always covered with cold water and the water is continually flowing. Using warm water or allowing the turkey to just sit in water are both ways of letting more bacteria grow. No one will give thanks for a day spent in the emergency room!

Another common question is "How long can I leave the food on the table?" The short answer is "As short a time as possible!" The recommended time is not more than 2 hours, but the less time food is at room temperature the safer it will be. However, if

you will have a lot of warm leftovers going into the refrigerator at one time, that will warm the refrigerator. So plan ahead on how you will chill the food before it goes in. The best thing to do is package food in shallow containers, and set them in ice water to get them cold. Sliced turkey going into the freezer should also be chilled first if there are more than one or two packages.

Remember too that cream- or egg-based pies also need to be refrigerated. That includes the standard favorite pumpkin pie, as well as cheesecakes, lemon meringue and banana cream.

Some of the more fun questions have been requests for what to do with leftover turkey, stuffing and cranberries. If turkey soup and turkey sandwiches are not your thing, there are still plenty of options. Chopped turkey can go into chili, either red or white bean chili. It's great in stir-fries with lots of veggies, and with all the bottled sauces around, all you'd need is a package of stir-fry frozen vegetables to make the meal. Turkey pot pie is an old favorite. Stir your favorite mixture of vegetables, gravy or canned cream of chicken soup and chunks of turkey together in a casserole dish. Top with dumplings or biscuits from a box or refrigerated, and bake until the topping is browned and the filling is heated through.

Leftover dressing must be refrigerated immediately and used within 1 or 2 days. It can be frozen, although many people don't care for the flavor or texture. If you don't want to just reheat it with turkey, try a different flavor. Crumble browned sausage and onions, mix with crumbled dressing. Beat 1-2 eggs with enough milk to moisten the dressing. Pour over the dressing, and bake until set. This makes a savory breakfast or brunch dish.

Finally, what to do with the cranberry sauce? Besides being a bright spot on the plate beside sliced turkey, it's actually very good spread on turkey, ham or roast pork in a sandwich. Add some finely chopped peppers and onions (jalapenos or sweet peppers your choice) and some diced fresh apple or pear and serve it as a salsa with grilled meat. It's a great add-in to barbeque sauce, especially for meatballs for New Year's Eve. And here's a recipe to make a surprise version of Harvard Beets.

#### Secret Ingredient Beets

1 15-oz can red beets, sliced or whole    1/2 cup smooth cranberry sauce

1/2 tsp ground cinnamon                      1 tsp grated orange rind

1/4 tsp ground cloves

Drain beets. Heat cranberry sauce, cinnamon, cloves and orange rind in small saucepan until sauce is melted and smooth. Stir in beets and simmer 5 minutes until heated through. Serve warm, or refrigerate for several hours to allow flavors to develop.

Serves 3-4.