

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.

Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

e-mail: mkeith@ufl.edu

Thanksgiving is Coming

In case you haven't noticed the calendar, Thanksgiving is just around the corner. And if your family has the cousins, aunts, uncles and assorted other kin coming for the Big Meal, now is the time to getting ready. Whether you go the traditional route with turkey and fixings, or prefer a modernist approach with turducken, vegan or even burgers, a big meal with lots of people in the kitchen will need some advance preparation. Planning now can make life much easier on the cook, and safer for the eaters. So let's get started.

No matter what's on the menu, you need a clean kitchen to start with. Take some time now to clean the refrigerator, counters, drain board and rack, cutting boards and utensils. A recent survey of home kitchens and utensils found that the MOST contaminated place in kitchens is the water dispenser in the refrigerator! The vegetable bins, ice dispenser and meat compartments were numbers 4, 5 and 6 on the list. So give that refrigerator a good scrubbing. There's no need to cross-contaminate all the good food on your menu by storing it someplace with invisible germs!

I hope you're wondering what was in spaces 2 and 3 on the top contaminated list. Those were filled by rubber spatulas and the blender! What's the problem with spatulas? It's the space between the blade and the handle. We don't pull the blade off and wash inside it. In blenders, the problem is that we don't unscrew the blades at the base of the jar and wash the gasket and threads there. But those items touch our food!

Once things are clean, a spray of sanitizer is a good idea. You can use a commercial one or make your own with a teaspoon of bleach in a quart of water. Spray in on the counters, cutting boards, refrigerator bins, etc, and leave it do its job for several minutes. If things are still damp, then you can pat them dry with paper towels.

While you're in the refrigerator, take a look at what's there. Throw out old or undated leftovers. Make room for the turkey or roast and other dishes. You'll need space for leftovers too, so plan now.

If a turkey is coming frozen, thawing in the refrigerator is definitely the safest. But it will need time and space. A little 8 to 12 pounder will take 2 or 3 days to thaw. A 20 pound big boy will need 5 or 6 days. But if you have chosen a frozen, prestuffed turkey, do not thaw it at all! It goes straight into the oven for maximum safety.

Besides the main course, your fresh vegetables and fruits will need refrigerator space. Many whole uncut fruits are safe on the counter, although they may get over-ripe. But all cut fruits and vegetables, from apples in the fruit salad to watermelon slices, must be kept cold to be safe. If there's not room in the 'fridge, then clean out the coolers and buy plenty of ice.

One last group of foods that needs cold space is the pies. Any pies, cakes or cookies with cream or egg fillings, including pumpkin and lemon, can be happy homes for bacteria at room temperature. Keep them cold so the little critters can't multiply!

Be sure you add some extra paper towels, hand soap and dish soap to the shopping cart along with the stuffing mix. Keeping all the hands in the kitchen clean is super important. Many hands make light work, but if they're spreading germs someone will regret it later.

Here's a delicious way to use up any leftover turkey. With a corn bread topping this pot pie is unusual too. Happy Thanksgiving!

Turkey Pot Pie

6 Tbsp margarine	7 Tbsp chopped onion
1 ¼ cup flour	4 ½ C chicken broth
2 pkt chicken bouillon, salt free	3 C cooked chopped turkey
¾ C chopped celery	½ lb carrots, peeled and diced
½ lb frozen green peas	1 box corn bread mix
1 egg (for cornbread)	1 C buttermilk (for cornbread)

Melt margarine in large saucepan. Add onions and sauté until tender. Stir in flour, then gradually stir in broth and bouillon with wire whisk until smooth. Cook until thickened, stirring often. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook celery and carrots until tender. Drain. Add these, peas and turkey to sauce. Pour into large baking dish. Mix cornbread according to package directions. Spread batter over turkey. Bake at 425° F until cornbread is golden and sauce is bubbling. Serves 10.

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