

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOPIC: HOW TO PROPERLY THAW FOOD

Uh, oh! You've arrived home after work and forgot to thaw something for dinner.

There are three safe ways to thaw food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave.

Refrigerator Thawing

Planning ahead is the key to this method because of the lengthy time involved. A large frozen item like a turkey requires at least a day (24 hours) for every 5 pounds of weight. Even small amounts of frozen food — such as a pound of ground meat or boneless chicken breasts — require a full day to thaw.

After thawing in the refrigerator, items such as ground meat, stew meat, poultry, seafood, should remain safe and good quality for an additional day or two before cooking; red meat cuts (such as beef, pork or lamb roasts, chops and steaks) 3 to 5 days. Food thawed in the refrigerator can be refrozen without cooking, although there may be some loss of quality.

Cold Water Thawing

This method is faster than refrigerator thawing but requires more attention. The food must be in a leak-proof package or plastic bag. If the bag leaks, bacteria from the air or surrounding environment could be introduced into the food. Also, the meat tissue may absorb water, resulting in a watery product.

The bag should be submerged in cold tap water, changing the water every 30 minutes so it continues to thaw. Small packages of meat, poultry or seafood — about a pound — may thaw in an hour or less. A 3-to 4-pound package may take 2 to 3 hours. For whole turkeys, estimate about 30 minutes per pound. If thawed completely, the food must be cooked immediately.

Foods thawed by the cold water method should be cooked before refreezing.

Microwave Thawing

When thawing food in a microwave, plan to cook it immediately after thawing because some areas of the food may become warm and begin to cook during the thawing process (bringing the food to "Danger Zone" temperatures). Holding partially cooked food is not recommended because any bacteria present wouldn't have been destroyed and, indeed, the food may have reached optimal temperatures for bacteria to grow.

After thawing in the microwave, always cook immediately after, whether microwave cooking, by conventional oven, or grilling.

Foods thawed in the microwave should be cooked before refreezing.

Cooking Without Thawing

When there is not enough time to thaw frozen foods, or you're simply in a hurry, just remember: it is safe to cook foods from the frozen state. The cooking will take approximately 50% longer than the recommended time for fully thawed or fresh meat and poultry.

On a separate note, it is important to point out that Kentucky is one of the unhealthiest states in our nation; but, a few healthy lifestyle choices could change this. First, eating normally proportioned helpings of nutritious foods including at least five fruits and vegetables a day can lower weight and reduce heart disease and diabetes. Second, exercising about 30 minutes per day can lower blood pressure. Third, avoiding the use of tobacco products can reduce several types of cancer. Finally, making sure you get your needed preventive screenings can detect diseases early and greatly increase your chances for a positive health outcomes, while receiving your recommended vaccinations can prevent acquiring disease in the first place. Visit our website at www.LCDHD.org and click the “52 Weeks to Health” banner to learn more about each of these areas.

Source: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/the-big-thaw-safe-defrosting-methods-for-consumers/bigthaw2>