



### ***Congressman Pallone offers advice on keeping contaminants out of holiday meals***

There are a number of practical steps that will help prevent food poisoning during the Thanksgiving holiday, Congressman Fank Pallone, Jr. said.

Because of the amount of food prepared and the susceptibility of turkey to contamination, the rate of food poisoning spikes for Thanksgiving, Pallone noted. Pallone is the chairman of the Energy & Commerce Health Subcommittee and the author of the Food Safety Enhancement Act, a measure that would modernize safety standards.

"The rate of food-related illness jumps upward during the Thanksgiving holiday," said Pallone. "Thanksgiving is a time for giving thanks, not getting sick. There are some simple steps that will help keep turkey and other food products free of contaminants."

On average, there are 76 million cases of food poisoning and 5,000 related deaths each year. While cooking, the basic advice to avert contamination is "clean, separate, cook and chill."

- **Clean** — Wash hands, surfaces and utensils often to avoid spreading bacteria when preparing food. Hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of foodborne illness.

- **Separate** — Use different cutting boards for raw meat, poultry, seafood, and veggies. When you prepare Thanksgiving dinner, keep the raw turkey away from vegetables and side dishes that won't be cooked.

- **Cook** — You can't tell it's done by how it looks! Use a food thermometer. Every part of the turkey should reach a minimum internal temperature of 165°F.
- **Chill** — Keep the fridge at 40°F degrees or below to keep bacteria from growing. Pumpkin pie should always be refrigerated and leftovers should be refrigerated within two hours.

Turkey carries a bacteria called *Clostridium perfringens* — a common cause of food poisoning. While cooking turkey to 165 degrees will kill the living *C. perfringens*, their spores will survive a trip through the oven. A warm turkey can act as an incubator if left sitting out too long.

Frozen turkeys should be defrosted in a refrigerator or immersed in cool water. Leftover turkey should be trimmed from the bone and refrigerated.

The nation's food safety standards are outdated, Pallone said, and therefore fail to meet the needs of the expansive food production and distribution system that has evolved in this country.

The size and complexity of the network makes food more vulnerable to poisoning that can happen anywhere from the fields where produce is grown to store shelves.

"We are making progress on our effort to get up-to-date safety standards in place for the food we eat and feed to our families," Pallone said. "Until then, people should know what steps they can take to keep families safe."

— *ANDY LAGOMARSINO, NEWJERSEYNEWSROOM.COM*