When you think “Thanksgiving”, what comes to mind? Turkey! Many of the turkey processors have set up hotlines to help panicked callers with preparation of those big, big pesky birds.

Consensus from the various industry websites ranks thawing as the number one problem with preparing the holiday bird. The National Turkey Federation recommends allowing approximately 24 hours for every five pounds of bird weight for thawing in the refrigerator. For a 16 to 20 pound turkey this equates to 3 to 4 days of thawing time.

From thawing questions, how big of bird to get, to cooking a turkey on a cookie sheet, the hotlines have heard it all and are there ready to help ease the stress of holiday meal planning.

- **Butterball Turkey Talk-Line**: 1-800-BUTTERBALL The Turkey Talk-Line from the folks at Butterball is a great place for answers to turkey questions. The line is open Monday through Friday from 10 AM to 4 PM PST. Bilingual help is available. [http://www.butterball.com](http://www.butterball.com)
- **Honeysuckle White Help Line**: 1-800-810-6325. This line offers pre-recorded answers to lots of your turkey preparation questions. Online help and leftover recipes. [http://www.honeysucklewhite.com](http://www.honeysucklewhite.com)
- **USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline**: 1-888-674-6854 If you have questions about food safety, including storage, handling and preparation of the Thanksgiving turkey, call the USDA hotline weekdays from 8 AM to 1 PM PST. TDD line: 1-800-256-7072 Online help for most frequently asked questions. [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/USDA_Meat_Poultry_Hotline/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/USDA_Meat_Poultry_Hotline/index.asp)
- **Reynolds Turkey Line**: 1-800-745-4000 This hotline is open 24 hours a day. Call to get the best tips about cooking using Reynolds products. [http://www.reynolds kitchens.com](http://www.reynolds kitchens.com)
- **Betty Crocker Hotline**: 1-888-ASK-BETTY or 1-888-275-2388, This phone line is open Monday-Friday from 4:30AM to 2:30PM PST, year round. Get information on everything from baking perfect cookies to delicious gravy. [http://www.bettycrocker.com/](http://www.bettycrocker.com/)

Source:
North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Does the thought of baking for the holidays leave you in a holi-daze? Frozen with fear that you won’t get it all done?

You may have favorite recipes for festive holiday baked goods that you always like to make. You may enjoy experimenting with new recipes. You may see the following as your options for holiday baking:

• Bake all night before the event;
• Bake early the day of the event;
• Bake the first free day before the event.

There is another way!

With the first two options listed above, your food will be fresh but you’ll be tired. With the third option, you’ll be fresh but your food may be stale! Or, possibly unsafe to eat!

Instead of baking to a frazzle this holiday season, try chilling out. Bake ahead and freeze foods to avoid last-minute hassles. Here are some guidelines to help you start. If you’re in doubt about whether a food will freeze well, it’s always a good idea to give it a trial run. Try making and freezing a small batch earlier in the season and see if you’re satisfied with the results. Or, experiment with a small amount this year and apply what you learned next year.

Remember: Commercial manufacturers have equipment and ingredients not available to home bakers and can successfully freeze many products you can’t. Also, commercial products contain preservatives that permit longer storage both in the freezer and at room temperature.

**COVERINGS FOR FROZEN FOOD**

It’s important to use freezer container or wrappings that are moisture-vapor-resistant. Here are some general guidelines:

• Suitable freezer wrapping materials include freezer paper, plastic freezer bags, plastic wrap designed for freezer use and extra heavy or heavy duty freezer aluminum foil.
• Check wrapping labels for specific information about whether the wrappings work for freezing. It’s important to use materials intended for freezing as they’re more likely to keep moisture out and are less likely to tear in the freezer.
• For freezer paper, check directions for which side of the paper is placed next to the food. Unless otherwise directed, the plastic coated side goes next to food. Secure freezer paper with freezer tape.

**Rigid Containers**

• Rigid freezer containers include plastic, glass, and cer-
Freezing Specific Foods

Cakes
To prevent crushing, place wrapped or bagged cakes in sturdy containers in the freezer. If you freeze slices of cake, put a double layer of freezer wrapping between slices. Avoid cream-type fillings as these often decline in quality when frozen. Cakes may be frozen unfrosted or frosted.

Unfrosted— Wrap UNFROSTED cakes BEFORE freezing. Frost AFTER cake is thawed. Thaw UNFROSTED cakes in their original wrapping at room temperature.

Frosted— The best frostings for freezing are fudge frostings and uncooked powdered or confectioner’s sugar frostings made with fat. Cooked frostings, seven minute frostings and other egg-white based frostings don’t freeze well. Freeze FROSTED cakes BEFORE packaging to prevent the wrapping from sticking to the frosting.

Thaw FROSTED cakes in the refrigerator. Remove the immediate wrapping so it won’t stick to the frosting as the cake thaws. Thaw the unwrapped cake on a serving plate in its protective container or a cake keeper. This prevents possible cross-contamination from other foods and accidental damage to the delicate frosted surface as you add and remove refrigerated items. If space limitations force you to thaw a frosted cake completely uncovered, place it on the TOP shelf of the refrigerator. Choose a location where cross-contamination and bumping, etc. will be avoided.

Pies
Meringue toppings toughen in the freezer. Custard and cream pies get watery after thawing and aren't recommended for freezing.

Choose a pan suitable for the freezer, such as the disposable aluminum foil pie plates found in many supermarkets, or rust-proof metal pie pans. Freezer/ovenproof glass also might work but needs to be handled with more care.

If you’re using an aluminum foil pie plate, compare its capacity to that of your regular pie pan. An easy way to obtain a general idea of differing volumes is to fill your regular pie pan with water, then pour the water into the foil pan. Measure the amount of liquid left in your regular pan; reduce the amount of filling by about that much.

A soggy crust can be a problem with frozen filled pies. Brush the inside of the bottom crust lightly with melted butter or margarine before adding the filling to help prevent a soggy crust.

As filled pies are higher in moisture content and take longer to cool/heat/reheat than many baked goods, pies can be trickier to freeze than many foods. The best advice: Do a trial run with freezing a favorite pie BEFORE you freeze it for a special event. Here are an assortment of tips that may help you decide how to most successfully freeze your favorite pies.

Unbaked Pie Crust— Prepare your regular crust recipe. Place in a freezer-suitable pie plate. If the pastry will be baked unfilled, prick the bottom of the crust in several places. Stack the pie pans, separating them with two layers of freezer paper. Put in a freezer bag or overwrap with aluminum foil. To use, while still frozen, bake at 475°F until light brown (about 8 to 10 minutes) or add filling to the frozen crust and bake as usual.

Suggested freezer storage time: 6 to 8 weeks.

Fruit, Mince, Nut Pies, Baked
Make as usual. Cool as rapidly as possible on a wire cooling rack. (Note: Pies baked in metal rather than glass pie plate will cool faster.) Freeze and then wrap. It’s easier to wrap a pie after freezing.

To serve, thaw in the refrigerator and serve chilled or reheat in a 325°F oven until warm. As a test of when your pie has warmed, “Joy of Cooking” (Scribner) suggests heating until a knife inserted through a steam vent on top of your pie comes out warm. As recommended for unbaked pies, cover edges with foil if they start browning too rapidly during reheating.

Suggested freezer storage time: 3-4 months.

Pumpkin Pie
If you’d like to prepare pumpkin pie ahead, it’s easiest and safest to freeze just the crust. Add the filling to the frozen crust just before baking and bake as usual. It takes just a few minutes to mix together the ingredients. As pumpkin pie is a perishable food and shouldn’t be left at room temperature more than two hours, your pie is safer to eat when you bake it the day of your meal. Also, the quality of a freshly baked homemade pumpkin pie is usually higher than a frozen one.

Sources:
Alice Henneman, M.S., R.D. & Fayrene Hamouz, Ph.D, R.D., FOOD REFLECTIONS
Who Should Not Be Vaccinated
Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. They include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group).
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.

If you have questions about whether you should get a flu vaccine, consult your health-care provider.

* "Healthy" indicates persons who do not have an underlying medical condition that predisposes them to influenza complications.

Source: Coordinating Center for Infectious Diseases (CCID)

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Do You Want to Manage Your Money Better?

1. Set Goals - It’s important that you decide what is important to you—now, 5 years from now, and later. Set realistic goals that you are willing to work toward.

2. Understand the Difference Between Needs and Wants - It’s important that we first spend for needs. This means that money for the rent or mortgage and utilities is a must. Other needs are food and clothing. Transportation is often a need in order to earn an income. Medical needs are important, too. People never get all the things they want, but unless they pay for needs first, they will usually have serious money problems.

3. Know What You Have to Spend - You can only spend what you take home. If more than one person in a family or household earns money, then you need to know the total amount of take-home pay. This is all you have available for needs, wants, and savings.

4. Know What Goes Out - The only way you’ll know where your money goes is to keep track of how it’s being spent. It’s easy if you start with a calendar and write in the large payments such as insurance.
   - Divide yearly expenses by 12 and quarterly expenses by 4 to get the average amount you need to set aside monthly.
   - List all payments and contributions you make once a month.
   - Estimate the cost of clothing, furnishings, etc., you bought and paid for last year. Divide by 12 to get a monthly estimate.
   - Keep track of what you actually spend for food, recreation, and other items for a week. Multiply this by 4 to get a monthly “guesstimate.”

5. Use a Spending Plan - A spending plan can help you get the things you need and want most.

6. Pay Yourself First - Ten percent of your take-home pay adds up to a sizable amount if it is put into savings and investments. Saving for emergencies such as accident, illness, or unemployment is a real need. Some experts recommend from 3 to 6 months’ take-home income for this. Setting aside money each payday can help you make periodic payments.

7. Use Credit to Your Advantage - The smaller your income the smaller the amount of debt you can afford. Ten to 15 percent of take-home pay going for installment debt (other than a home mortgage) is about all the average income family can afford. Wise credit use means that you shop for the lowest cost you can find, that you make as large a down payment as possible, and that you pay back as soon as possible.

8. Keep Financial Records - Records can help you manage your money. They tell where your money goes and can help you decide what changes you’d like to make in your spending.

Source: North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service