

INFORMATION FROM THE FDA

Refrigerator Thawing

- Planning ahead is the key because a **large frozen Turkey** requires at least 24 hours for every 5 pounds.
- Small amounts of frozen food — such as a **pound of Ground Meat** or boneless **Chicken Breasts** — require a full day to thaw
- Food will take **longer** to thaw in a refrigerator set at **35 °F** than one set at **40 °F**.
- After thawing in the refrigerator, items such as **Ground Meat, Stew Meat, Poultry, and 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) should remain safe and good quality 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 **1 hour** or less.
- A **3-to 4-pound package** may take **2 to 3 hours**. For whole Turkeys, estimate about 30 minutes per pound.
- Once thawed, food must be **cooked immediately**. Foods thawed by the cold-water method should be **cooked before refreezing**.

Microwave Thawing

- After **thawing** in the microwave, always **cook immediately**, whether microwave cooking, by conventional oven, or grilling.
- 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.
- Foods thawed in the microwave should be cooked before refreezing.
- Also, never thaw foods in a garage, basement, car, dishwasher or plastic garbage bag; out on the kitchen counter, outdoors or on the porch. These methods can leave your foods unsafe to eat.

Cooking Without Thawing

- 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.

Remember: Even though the center of the package may still be frozen as it thaws on the counter, the outer layer of the food could be in the "**Danger Zone**," between 40 and 140 °F — temperatures where bacteria multiply rapidly.

To reiterate a previous statement, I only recommend Refrigerator Thawing. Yes, cold water thawing, microwave thawing and simply cooking without thawing are safe if done correctly. However, with any type of forced thawing there comes a loss in quality of your food product.