The calendar says “Winter”, but the weather says, “It’s Spring today and Fall tomorrow!” And every now and then, even Summer makes a cameo appearance. Global warming or climate change—the debate is still on. But there should be no debate about the temperatures of food for food safety.

There are some people who are susceptible to the changing weather and get sick easily. When food is not cooked to its proper temperature or left out too long, bacteria that cause food borne illness can start to multiply rapidly and potentially cause people to get very sick—especially those who are very young, very old or have weakened immune systems.

With so many occasions for parties during the winter—Christmas, New Year’s and the Superbowl—it’s especially important to follow some basic food safety rules to be sure to keep the party going.

**Keep HOT foods HOT and COLD foods COLD!**

Use hot plates or sterno cans beneath cooked foods or ice and ice packs around cold foods to help maintain proper temperatures.

**Don’t leave food out for more than 2 hours!**

Serve food in smaller containers and frequently replace food as needed to help minimize the time that food sits out.

**Clean before, during and after food preparation!**

Keeping areas clean will help keep bacteria at bay!

**Watch the clock and Check the stick**—Know proper cooking times and use a food thermometer to be sure that foods are cooked to their proper internal temperatures.

**For more food safety tips, please visit:**

- www.fightbac.org
- www.befoodsafe.org
- www.foodsafety.gov

**Meal Planning Basics**

Contributed by: Kimberly Bryan, EFNEP Educator

Whatever your method of planning meals, here are some basic tips:

- **Check what you have in your refrigerator, freezer and cupboards** that need to be used up, and fill in your menu plan using these items first. This is your “go-to” list.

- **Serve what they like.** When you serve food your family likes, you avoid waste. Make a collection of economical, nutritious recipes that your family likes and serve them often.

- **Consider your schedule.** When planning your menus and shopping list, think about how much time you will have for preparing food in the coming week. If it’s a laid-back week, use the extra time to make meals ahead of time and freeze them. If it’s a hectic week, use some of the meals you stockpiled earlier or just keep it simple. Make sure everyone pitches in, especially if you’re having a busy week.

- **Check newspaper ads.** Use local store ads to check for weekly sales. As you get to know the costs of items you purchase frequently, you will be able to quickly identify true deals.

**SOURCE:** Iowa State University Extension
Turkey Time: Year Round Options

A typical turkey is ten pounds or larger and that is a LOT of meat to cook with on a regular basis.

With chicken, a normal sized fryer is about three pounds and perfect for a family of 4-6 depending on how much each person eats.

To feed a family with three children, I would often buy the smaller turkeys when they were on sale and use them like chicken.

Last fall, a large retailer had turkeys on sale for $.48 a pound. That was a lot cheaper than most chicken so I bought five of them.

When I thaw a whole turkey, I cut the breast meat into portions and cut chunks from the thigh so that the size of meat is more even and then can be used in a variety of recipes.

It is an inexpensive meat to buy when you consider that a big bird actually has a higher meat per bone ratio. If done right, a big old 25 lb. bird can make 4-5 meals for a family of 4-6. Maybe even more if you are creative.

I take those portions I cut and figure out how much I will need for one meal and that night I prepare braised turkey with potatoes and gravy and a veggie.

The extra meat and carcass is roasted the next day and I remove all the meat and freeze it in portions enough for one meal per pack-

Barbara Fisher, EFNEP Educator

Winter Nutrition Guide

When winter days are cold and you want to warm up fast, a bowl of soup or stew can certainly be appealing but there’s no reason to throw all your healthy eating habits out the window because it’s dark and cold outside.

- **Eat high-quality carbs**
  Listen to your cravings - there is a reason for them! In the winter, with fewer sunny hours, your stored serotonin (the "feel-good" brain chemical) starts to decline. Your cravings for carbohydrate-loaded comfort foods are your body's cries for more serotonin. But be careful when choosing carbohy-
  
adrates to boost serotonin! Opt for nutritious whole grains and choose high-quality carbs such as sweet potatoes, pump-
  
kins, and squashes.

- **Love seasonal produce**
  Winter produce can be as exciting and colorful as summer berries, and there are many healthy choices available. Work seasonal produce such as pomegranates, cranberries, citrus fruits, purple grapes, and orange root vegetables into your meals. You'll not only add color to your plate, you'll pack in some serious nutrition.

- **Consider Vitamin D supplements**
  If you live in the northern hemisphere or wear sunscreen all the time, consider taking Vitamin D supplements. Numerous studies have shown that oral intake of 1000 IU Vitamin D can reduce the risk of colon, breast, and ovarian cancers by as much as 50 percent. Vitamin D can be found in fortified dairy products, fatty fish, and egg yolks. But reaching the recommended level through food alone is rather difficult. Therefore, the Canadian Cancer Society recommends that all adults take Vitamin D supplements every day during the fall and winter seasons. Be sure to speak to your doctor before starting any supplementation.

- **Nourish your cold**
  Despite numerous claims you may have heard, no diet remedy or supplement has been scientifically proven effective at preventing cold and flu. However, studies have shown that 1,000 mg of Vitamin C supplements may make your cold milder and shorten it by half a day. In addition, there's a promising perk for yogurt lovers! A German study found that probiotics (as found in yo-
  
gurt with active culture) may shorten your cold episode by almost two days. So keep on eating those "friendly" and healthy foods!

Source: www.HealthCastle.com