



For Safety's Sake...

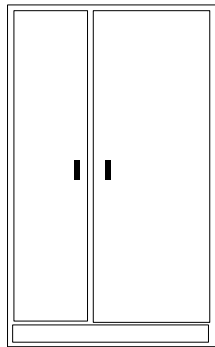
Thawing Food Safely

Departments of Food Science and Family & Consumer Sciences

Prepared By: Alice Pettitt, Extension Agent
North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Orange County

Food should be thawed safely to (1) minimize the time that it is in the temperature danger zone (40°F to 140°F), and (2) to prevent cross-contamination. Thawing at room temperature on the counter is unsafe. Thawed portions of potentially hazardous foods can support bacterial growth. Potentially hazardous foods are moist, protein-rich foods, such as meats, fish, poultry, rice, and beans.

There are four ways to safely thaw food. The food you are thawing will determine which method you choose.



1. Thaw in the refrigerator.

- Thaw in a refrigerator operating at 40°F or colder.
- Place food in a pan to prevent dripping.
- Place the pan of food on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator.

Note: This method requires advanced planning. For large pieces of meat like a whole turkey or roast, allow 24 hours for each five pounds of meat.



2. Thaw under drinkable, running water.

- Place the food in a clean, sanitized sink or pot.
- The water should be running constantly and the temperature of the water should be 70°F or less. Cool running water is required to prevent rapid growth of bacteria and to wash off loose food particles.

Note: Use for foods that can be thawed within two hours. This method does not work well with large pieces of food that cannot be safely thawed in two hours.

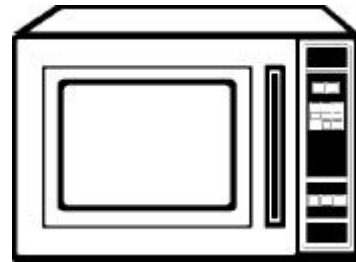


3. Thaw as part of the cooking process.

- Works well for small amounts of food, such as vegetables, hamburger patties, and seafood.
- Always cook food to a safe internal temperature.
- When thawing already cooked foods by this method, always reheat to 165°F.

4. Thaw in the microwave.

- Works for small amounts of food and single servings.
- After thawing in the microwave, immediately cook food in the microwave or by conventional methods.
- When continuing to cook in the microwave:
 - cover to retain moisture and to prevent spattering
 - rotate food halfway through the cooking cycle
 - stir food
 - allow 2 minutes standing time before serving food



Keep food safe by using a safe thawing method.

Materials in the **For Safety's Sake** series were produced by members of a special Food Safety Agent Resource Team and have been peer reviewed by individuals from Family & Consumer Sciences and The Food Science Department at North Carolina State University.

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