Benefit from properly prepared poultry

It’s reaching that time of year again, the cooking season! Family get togethers, holidays, and celebrations are just around the corner. As these special events approach, and you begin planning your events, be sure to keep food safety in mind. A popular food choice for this time of year is poultry and poultry products. “Poultry is a nutritious economical choice and very versatile in the ways you can cook with it” says [insert name here] County Extension Agent. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, it is estimated that that 1 in 4 Americans will get a foodborne illness each year. You can protect your family by following certain food safety measures when handling or preparing poultry and poultry products.

It is not always easy to tell when a food product is safe to eat. Most bacteria cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. To ensure your poultry is safe to eat, consumers should be careful when handling raw products at all times. Follow these safety tips when preparing your poultry.

**Grocery Shopping:** “Food safety begins at the store,” said [insert name here]. Do not buy products that have been bruised or damaged in any way. If purchasing frozen food, make sure you have enough storage space in your freezer and the product is frozen solid. Refrigerated food should be cold to the touch. Keep raw foods separate from ready to eat foods in the cart as well as in bags.

**In the Kitchen:** One of the most effective ways to prevent bacteria from spreading is by practicing good personal hygiene. Be sure to wash your hands before preparing food and after using the bathroom, changing diapers, or handling any raw foods. Keep your kitchen clean. Be sure to wash cutting boards, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water. “A
common sanitizing solution you can use is 1 teaspoon bleach to one quart of water” states [insert name here].

**Cooking and Serving:** Whole poultry and poultry parts should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Place the thermometer in the thickest part of the meat away from bone. Be sure to check the temperature of the meat before serving it to make sure it reached its proper temperature of 165 degrees F. The only way to ensure your food is properly cooked is to use a calibrated food thermometer.

When serving food, be sure to use only clean utensils and dishes. Heat only what you will be serving and refrigerate everything else. Do not let food sit out more than 2 hours.

**Leftovers:** Divide all cooked foods into shallow containers and refrigerate or freeze within two hours of cooking. Throw away any food left out at room temperature for more than two hours. Use leftovers within 3-4 days then discard or freeze. When using frozen leftovers; use within 2 to 6 months for best quality. Reheat all leftovers to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F before eating.

For more information on safe handling of poultry products, contact your local County Extension Agent at [insert contact information here].