

November 2024

Food Insecurities Newsletter



Thanksgiving is an ideal opportunity to volunteer at your local soup kitchen, food pantry, or food bank. Whether you're helping to contribute by donating items, assembling meal boxes or serving food at a Thanksgiving dinner, there are plenty of ways to make the holiday meaningful. Start planning your Thanksgiving volunteering now!

How To Volunteer



Find a soup kitchen or food pantry, you can use online resources such as:

Feeding America <https://www.feedingamerica.org/>

Food Pantries <https://foodpantries.org/>

United Food Operation <https://unitedfoodoperation.org/participating-food-pantries/>

Mountaineer Food Bank https://www.volunteermvc.org/agency/detail/?agency_id=57842

Local WV FRN (West Virginia Family Resource Network) <https://wvfrn.org/>

Catholic Charities West Virginia <https://www.ccwva.org/>

Local community churches

Local community action agencies such as:

Central WV Community Action <https://centralwvaction.org/food-to-freedom/>

Nicholas County Community Action <https://ncapwv.org/>

Raleigh County Community Action <https://www.rccaa.org/>

Community Action of South Eastern West Virginia <https://www.casewv.org/>



Call ahead: It's a good idea to call ahead to see if they need volunteers.



Sign up for a shift: Many soup kitchens and food pantries list volunteer shifts on their website.



Show up: Volunteer at the soup kitchen or food pantry and have fun.

Self-Care Tips During Thanksgiving



While the holidays can bring joy, they can also be overwhelming for many, resulting in feelings of loneliness, anxiety, or depression. Self-care involves consciously taking steps to nurture your physical, mental, and emotional well-being. This can encompass various habits, practices, and lifestyle choices. Engaging in self-care helps promote and sustain your health, prevent illness, and manage health challenges.

Plan and Prioritize: The key to a less stressful Thanksgiving week is planning. Take some time to make a to-do list and prioritize tasks. Consider what needs to be done, who can help, and what can be simplified or even eliminated. Don't hesitate to delegate responsibilities; you don't have to do it all on your own. Remember, asking for help is not a crime, it's a healthy thing to do!

Set Realistic Expectations: We often put pressure on ourselves to create the "perfect" Thanksgiving, but it's imperative to just be real, ok? Not everything has to go flawlessly. Accept that there might be some mishaps, and that's okay. Your loved ones are there to enjoy each other's company, not critique your cooking or decorations. Laugh off the mistakes, because that's just life, isn't it?

Self-Care Moments: Amid the holiday chaos, remember to carve out time for self-care. Take short breaks to decompress, breathe deeply, and clear your mind. This can be as simple as enjoying a cup of tea, stepping outside for a walk, or taking a much-deserved nap. Or simply scroll on your phone if you need to! The goal is to recharge and reduce stress.

Boundaries with Family: Spending time with family can be both rewarding and challenging. It's crucial to set healthy boundaries with family members to maintain your mental well-being.

If conversations get tense, feel free to take a step back, change the topic, or politely excuse yourself. Prioritize your emotional health.

Practice Gratitude: While Thanksgiving is about giving thanks, remember to practice gratitude for the little things. Keep a gratitude journal or simply reflect on the positive aspects of your life. This can help shift your focus from stressors to the things you appreciate.

Limit Technology: Thanksgiving week is a perfect time to unplug a bit. Reduce screen time, especially when you're with family. Engage in face-to-face conversations and connections. Limiting your exposure to news and social media can also help reduce anxiety.

Seek Support: If you find yourself struggling with your mental health during Thanksgiving week, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Talk to a trusted friend or a mental health professional. Sharing your feelings and concerns can be incredibly relieving.

Celebrate Imperfection: Remember that perfection is overrated. Thanksgiving is about coming together and appreciating the love and connections we share. Embrace the beauty of imperfection and cherish the authentic moments of togetherness.

Thanksgiving week doesn't have to be a chaotic and stressful time. By planning ahead, setting achievable expectations, prioritizing self-care, establishing boundaries, and focusing on gratitude, you can navigate the holiday season while protecting your mental well-being. Take a deep breath, cherish the time spent with loved ones, and relish the simple pleasures of the holiday. Wishing you a fantastic and mentally healthy Thanksgiving!





LET'S TALK TURKEY

Unsafe handling and under-cooking your holiday bird can cause foodborne illnesses. Here are a few tips from the USDA to keep your Thanksgiving safe and delicious!

Types of turkeys regulated by the USDA:



*For more information about each type of turkey, visit fsis.usda.gov.

3 WAYS TO THAW

While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely. As soon as it begins to thaw, bacteria that may have been present before freezing will begin to grow again. Here are three ways to safely thaw your bird:



Refrigerator:
Safe to store the turkey for another 1 – 2 days in the refrigerator.

This is the USDA recommended thawing method.

How to thaw:
Allow approximately 24 hrs. for every 4-5lbs of bird.

Cold water:

Cook immediately after thawing.

How to thaw:
Submerge the bird in cold water & change every 30 mins.



Microwave:

Cook immediately after thawing.



How to thaw:
Use defrost function based on weight

For more information on safe thawing methods, visit fsis.usda.gov

DID YOU KNOW?



It's safe to cook a frozen turkey though cooking time will be 50% longer!

Clean

Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

Utensils
Plates
Countertops
Cutting boards } SHOULD ALSO BE WASHED

Bacteria, which can be present inside and outside a turkey, can't be washed off the bird! Cooking is the only way to destroy this potentially dangerous bacteria.

SO DON'T WASH YOUR TURKEY!!

SEPARATE

Separate raw turkey from fresh food, and use separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils.

Keep dishes that touch raw food separate, too!

Wash items that touch raw meat with soap and warm water.

COOK

Your bird is not safe until it reaches 165 °F — you cannot tell by the color.

Remember to ensure any stuffing cooked with the bird reaches 165 °F, too!

Use three places to check the temperature.

Thickest part of breast
Innermost part of wing
Innermost part of thigh

When turkey is removed from the oven, let it stand 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to settle.

CHILL

Take your time around the dinner table, but refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours!

Safe in fridge 3-4 days

Safe frozen, but use within 2-6 months for best quality.

Be sure to pack leftovers in a cooler if traveling.

Leftover turkey should be cut into smaller pieces, and store items separately in smaller containers.

Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165 °F.

Remember, bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses can't be smelled or tasted!

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Visit foodsafety.gov

If you have a specific question, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHOTLINE or visit AskKaren.gov. Visit PregunteleaKaren.gov for questions in Spanish.



Homemade Apple Cider Recipe



For the best flavor, we strongly encourage using a variety of apples such as some sweet and some tart.

Ingredients

1 **orange**

10 medium **apples** (use a variety—I use Honeycrisp and Granny Smith)

3 **cinnamon sticks** (or 1 Tablespoon ground cinnamon)

1 teaspoon **ground cloves**

granulated sugar

Instructions

1. Peel the orange and place the segments in a 4 quart or larger slow cooker. (Pictures show unpeeled, but we prefer peeling it for a less bitter flavor.) Rinse the apples, cut into quarters, and place in the slow cooker. Add the cinnamon sticks, ground cloves, and sugar. Add just enough water to cover the fruit.
2. Cook on low heat for 6-7 hours. (Or high heat for 3.)
3. After 6-7 hours, the fruit will be very soft. Use a large spoon to mash the fruit and release its liquids. Allow the cider to cook on low for 1 more hour.
4. Very slowly strain the chunky liquid through a fine mesh sieve into a large pot or pitcher. You can

discard the solids. Strain the cider one more time to rid any other solids. Serve the cider warm.

5. Leftover cider keeps well in the refrigerator for up to 5-7 days. Warm up on the stove before serving or enjoy it cold.

Notes

1. **Freezing Instructions:** Cider can be frozen up to 3 months. Thaw in the refrigerator.
2. **Special Tools** (affiliate links): [Slow Cooker](#) (4-quart or larger) | [Large Wooden Spoon](#) | [Fine Mesh Sieve](#)
3. **Sugar:** Adjust the sugar to your taste. We usually use 1/4 cup (50g) granulated sugar for a spicier cider. If you prefer your apple cider on the sweeter side (like the kind you buy at the store), use 1/2 cup (100g) of granulated sugar.
4. **No Slow Cooker? No Problem!** In step 1, place all of the ingredients into a large stock pot instead of a slow cooker. Turn the stove up to high heat and bring everything to a simmer while stirring occasionally. Once simmering, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for 2 hours. Mash the fruit as described in step 3. Then, allow the cider to cook for 1 more hour. Continue with step 4.

Find the recipe online:

<https://sallysbakingaddiction.com/homemade-apple-cider/>

For more information or if you have any questions, please reach out to Linda Prutsok at linda.k.prutsok@wv.gov or call 304-872-9200 Ext. 104.

