

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, 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.