

# Food Facts

## Food Experts Serve Up Answers For Consumers

(NAPSA)—There's good news for cooks who have questions about food safety that just can't wait. Free access to accurate information is a phone call away thanks to a government-sponsored hotline.

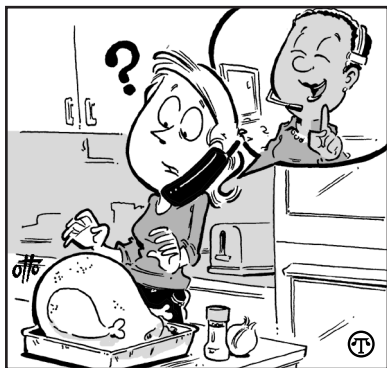
From novice cooks wondering how long to safely roast a turkey to more experienced food handlers asking about additives, residues and foodborne bacteria, the food safety specialists at the other end of the phone line have heard it all—2 million times over.

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline provides answers to food safety questions on weekdays year-round. It's estimated that the line receives more than 50,000 calls yearly.

This toll-free telephone service, which began July 1, 1985, helps prevent foodborne illness by answering questions about the safe storage, handling and preparation of meat, poultry and egg products. It's staffed by food safety specialists with backgrounds in home economics, nutrition and food technology.

The majority of calls come from consumers regarding how to safely handle their food, including food safety during power outages; food manufacturer recalls; foodborne illnesses; and the inspection of meat, poultry and egg products.

Often, the first question callers ask is "Are you a real person?" Just as often, they are surprised to learn that this is one of the rare services



**Since 1985, a free hotline has been available to cooks who have questions about food safety. Callers can get answers in both English and Spanish.**

where a live person answers callers' specific questions one on one.

Beginning in 2002, the toll-free hotline extended its service to callers whose first language is Spanish. By touching the appropriate number at the prompt, callers will be connected to a Spanish-speaking food safety specialist who can answer their questions. Callers may also listen to more than 50 food safety messages recorded in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day.

The hotline is open Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Eastern Time and on Thanksgiving Day from 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Eastern Time, but closed on other federal government holidays. To learn more, call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at (888) 674-6854 or send an e-mail to [mph hotline@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:mph hotline@fsis.usda.gov) or online consumers can ask a food safety question at [AskKaren.gov](http://AskKaren.gov).