

Frozen, raw or cooked poultry that has thawed may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or if it is still cold, about 40° F. and has been held no longer than 1 or 2 days at refrigerated temperatures after thawing. Thawing and refreezing may lower the eating quality of the food.

Again, in your bulletin issued in 1960, Home Care of Purchased Frozen Foods, it says:

If foods have thawed only partially and there are still ice crystals in the package, they may be safely refrozen. Even this partial thawing reduces the quality, of course, and if some of the high quality has already been lost during previous partial thawing, the additional loss may result in very low quality.

(Excerpts from USDA publications are printed in the appendix.)

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Now, the story I told was of the turkeys that were frozen and refrozen and it just seems to me that we have no way of knowing whether the quality has changed, other than what you told us in your pamphlets issued by the Department of Agriculture.

Your suggestion is that, presumably, there was no alteration in quality.

Dr. MEHREN. I go much further than that.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Presumably the lady got a fair shake.

Dr. MEHREN. I made no presumptions at all. I might note in your first sentence that you read from the USDA material there was a presumptive or disjunctive statement, that quality may be affected.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. I said that.

Dr. MEHREN. If you take the technical materials on which that is based, you will find there are systematic, functional relationships between temperature levels, time, and even vacuum. Now the question is simply this in this case. A USDA grader clearly put a grade A stamp on those turkeys after the freezing, thawing, refreezing process. If they didn't meet the legally specified standards for grade A after this thaw, and refreeze, then he failed and made a mistake or was derelict; but generally speaking, he looks at it and the grade A after thawing doesn't go on unless it's grade A.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. We understand that.

Dr. MEHREN. I'm not sure I understand your question.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. That's a good principle, but you also don't let frozen TV dinners out of a factory if they have bacteria.

Dr. MEHREN. Not if we can help it.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. So that one mistake that happened in factory "A" seems to indicate the same—human beings are fallible. The point I made is that your inspector rejected these turkeys.

Dr. MEHREN. He rejected these turkeys for Government procurement, requiring 15° F. This is not a requirement for commercial use. They were at 30° F., which is totally safe for human consumption and totally compatible with normal commercial activity.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. But commercial requirement is 0° F., isn't it?

Dr. MEHREN. No.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. That's what we were told.

Dr. MEHREN. No; it isn't. The 15° F. happens to be the USDA for commodity distribution, school lunch—

Mr. WYDLER. What is satisfactory for commercial use?

Dr. MEHREN. Anything, really, that shouldn't be much higher than 38° F. except for one rare type of bacteria.

Mr. WYDLER. Is that standard?