

Preparing Turkey Safely

Nutrition

Turkey provides protein along with other key nutrients. A serving is 3 ounces cooked poultry (about the size of a deck of cards). One serving of roasted, skinless turkey breast provides: 120 calories; 1 gram fat; 55 milligrams cholesterol; 45 milligrams sodium; 26 grams protein; iron—8% daily value

Right Size Turkey

Use this chart as a helpful guide:

- Whole bird - 1 pound per person
- Boneless turkey breast - ½ pound per person
- Turkey breast - ¾ pound per person
- Frozen pre-stuffed - 1¼ pounds per person

Safe Thawing

Turkey must be kept at a safe temperature (below 40°F) for the big thaw.

Three safe ways to thaw:

1. Refrigerator:

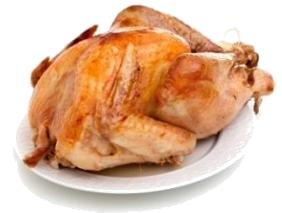
- Allow 24 hours per five pounds.
 - 8 - 12 pounds = 2 to 3 days
 - 12 - 16 pounds = 3 to 4 days
 - 16 - 20 pounds = 4 to 5 days
 - 20 - 24 pounds = 5 to 6 days
- Once completely thawed, cook within 1 to 2 days.

2. Cold Water:

- Place breast down in its unwrapped wrapper in cold water to cover.
- Change water every 30 minutes to keep surface cool.
- Allow 30 minutes per pound.
 - 8 - 12 pounds = 4 to 6 hours
 - 12 - 16 pounds = 6 to 8 hours
 - 16 - 20 pounds = 8 to 10 hours
 - 20 - 24 pounds = 10 to 12 hours
- Cook immediately after thawing.

3. Microwave Oven:

- Check your microwave's instruction book.
- Cook immediately after thawing.



To Wash or Not To Wash?

Review of studies from several universities related to washing meat and poultry indicates that there is no benefit. In fact, washing can allow bacteria on meat and poultry to spread to other ready-to-eat foods. Therefore, the USDA does not recommend washing your turkey before cooking. Cooking to proper temperature will destroy any bacteria present.

If you must wash, you must clean and sanitize sink and surrounding countertops after washing meat or poultry. Wash sink and countertops with hot soapy water using paper towels. Rinse. Then sanitize with a bleach solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach per 1 quart of water. Air dry.

To Stuff or Not To Stuff?

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stuffing a turkey may increase the risk of foodborne illness. The stuffing may not reach 165°F—the temperature needed to kill bacteria present in the stuffing.

The University of Georgia tested turkeys to determine cooking times and techniques. The study concluded that stuffing should be cooked outside the bird since there is no guarantee that the stuffing will reach 165°F at the same time the turkey reaches this temperature. If the stuffing has not reached 165 °F when the turkey is done, further cooking will be required. Therefore, the meat may be overcooked.

For optimal safety and uniform doneness, cook stuffing separately. You can get the same flavor if you precook stuffing to 165°F. Then loosely stuff into the turkey during the last half-hour of cooking

If You Must Stuff

Follow these basic rules:

- Prepare the stuffing just before placing in the bird.
- Cook and cool all protein products (i.e. sausage, eggs, giblets and root vegetables like celery and onions) *before* adding to other stuffing ingredients.
- Stuff turkey *loosely*—about ¾ cup of stuffing per pound of turkey.
- The stuffing should be moist, rather than dry, since heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a wet environment.
- Place stuffed turkey immediately in an oven set no lower than 325°F.
- The center of the stuffing must reach 165°F after roasting.
- Let bird stand for 20 minutes before removing stuffing and carving.
- If you don't use a meat or instant-read thermometer, do not stuff the bird. Without a meat thermometer, there is no way to visually check whether the stuffing has reached the correct temperature.

Roasting Tips

- Place turkey breast side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan (2-2½ inches deep).
- Internal temperature should reach a minimum of 165°F in the thigh and thickest part of the breast before removing from oven. Cooking turkey to higher temperatures yields a golden, tender bird. (170°F breast, 180°F thigh)
- Let bird stand 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to absorb back into the meat.

Turkeys Cook Faster Than Before

Revised timetable for cooking a completely thawed turkey at 325°F.

Approximate Cooking Times (fresh or thawed)

<u>Weight</u> (pounds)	<u>Unstuffed</u> (hours)	<u>Stuffed</u> (hours)
4 - 6 (breast)	1½ - 2¼	
6 - 8 (breast)	2¼ - 3¼	2½ - 3½
8 - 12	2¾ - 3	3 - 3½
12 - 14	3 - 3¾	3½ - 4
14 - 18	3¾ - 4¼	4 - 4¼
18 - 20	4¼ - 4½	4¼ - 4¾
20 - 24	4½ - 5	4¾ - 5¼

Cooking Partially Thawed or Frozen Turkey

- Remove wrapping before placing in oven.
- Add 50% additional cooking time per above chart.
- After 3½ hours carefully remove giblet package.
- Frozen pre-stuffed turkeys—do not thaw before cooking, follow package directions.

Storing Leftovers Safely

- Refrigerate all leftovers in shallow containers (2-3 inches deep) within two hours of cooking.
- Use leftover turkey, stuffing and gravy within 3 to 4 days.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F or until hot and steaming.
- Frozen leftovers. Use within 2 to 6 months for best flavor.

Resources

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

- 888-674-6854 or MPHotline.fsis@usda.gov
- Website: www.fsis.usda.gov

University of Minnesota Extension AnswerLine

- 800-854-1678
- Monday-Friday: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

References: Butterball Turkey Talk Line; Minnesota Turkey Association; USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service; University of Wisconsin Food Safety.

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extension.umn.edu/food-safety

