

TURKEY BASICS

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 provides:

- 129 calories
- 2.6 grams fat
- .9 grams saturated fat
- 64 milligrams cholesterol
- 59 milligrams sodium
- 25 grams protein
- 1.5 milligrams iron

Right Size Turkey

Use the following chart as a helpful guide:

- Whole bird – 1 pound per person
- Boneless turkey breast – ½ pound per person
- Turkey breast – ¾ pound per person

Safe Thawing

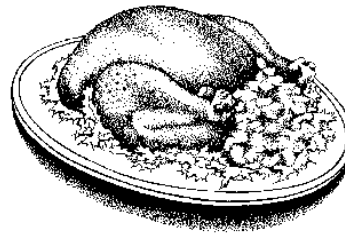
Turkey must be kept at a safe temperature (below 40°F) for the big thaw.

Three safe ways to thaw:

1. Refrigerator: Allow 24 hours per five pounds.
 - 8 – 12 pounds = 1 to 2 days
 - 12 – 16 pounds = 2 to 3 days
 - 16 – 20 pounds = 3 to 4 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 have to clean and sanitize sink and surrounding countertops. 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.

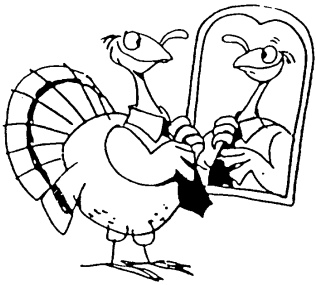
To Stuff or Not To Stuff?

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stuffing a turkey is an invitation for trouble. You risk the possibility of foodborne illness. The stuffing may not reach the 165°F temperature needed to kill bacteria.

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 180°F in the innermost part of the thigh. 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ 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

- Be sure turkey is completely thawed.
- Place turkey breast-side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan (2-2½ inches deep).
- Lightly coat the skin with oil, shortening or vegetable cooking spray to prevent skin from drying out.
- Internal temperature must reach a minimum of 180°F in the thigh before removing from oven. Turkey breast must reach a minimum of 170°F in the thickest part before removing from oven. (Turkey is safely cooked when the food thermometer reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165°F. Cooking turkey to higher temperatures yields a golden, tender bird.)
- Let bird stand 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to absorb back into the meat.

Turkey Are Cooking Faster Than Before

Revised timetable for cooking turkey at 325°F.

Approximate Cooking Times

<u>Weight</u> (pounds)	<u>Unstuffed</u> (hours)	<u>Stuffed</u> (hours)
4 – 6 (breast)	1½ – 2¼	
6 – 8 (breast)	2½ – 3¼	
8 – 12	2¾ – 3¼	3 – 3½
12 – 14	2 – 3¾	3½ – 4
14 – 18	3¾ – 4¼	4 – 4¼
18 – 20	4¼ – 4½	4¼ – 4¾
20 – 24	4½ – 5	4¾ – 5¼

Storing Leftovers Safely

- Refrigerate all leftovers in shallow containers (2-3 inches deep) within two hours of cooking.
- Use leftover turkey within 3 to 4 days.
- Use stuffing and gravy within 1 to 2 days.
- Freeze leftovers. Use frozen stuffing and gravy within 1 month and turkey slices within 4 months.
- Reheat leftovers to 165°F or until hot and steaming.

Resources

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

- (888) 674-6854;
- Monday-Friday: 7 AM - 1 PM.
- Thanksgiving Day: 5 AM - 11 AM
- Email questions http://www.fsis.usda.gov/food_safety_education/ask_karen/

University of Minnesota Extension AnswerLine

- 1-800-854-1678
- Monday-Friday: 9:00 AM – noon & 1:00 – 4:00 PM

References:

- Butterball Turkey Talk-Line
- Minnesota Turkey Research and Promotion Council
- USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
888-674-6854

