

FOOD SAFETY FACTS

TURKEY BASICS:



ROASTING INSTRUCTIONS

Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 ° F. Pre-heating the oven is not necessary.

Place turkey on a rack in a roasting pan.

For safety and uniform doneness of the turkey, cook stuffing separately in a casserole. Use a food thermometer to check that the internal temperature of the stuffing has reached 165 ° F.

If you choose to stuff a turkey, you must use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey and the stuffing. The temperature of a whole turkey must reach 180 ° F in the innermost part of the thigh and the center of the stuffing must reach 165 ° F. If the stuffing has not reached 165 ° F, continue cooking the turkey until the stuffing reaches 165 ° F.

If the turkey has a “pop-up” temperature indicator, it is also recommended that a food thermometer be used to test in several places, including the innermost part of the thigh and the center of the stuffing.

When cooking only a turkey breast, the internal temperature should reach 170 ° F.

MANY FACTORS CAN AFFECT THE ROASTING TIME OF A WHOLE TURKEY:

- A frozen or partially frozen turkey takes longer to cook than a completely thawed turkey.
- A turkey will cook faster in a dark roasting pan.
- The depth and size of the pan can affect heat circulation to all areas of the turkey.
- The use of a foil tent for the entire cooking time can slow cooking.
- Putting a lid on the roasting pan speeds up cooking.
- An oven cooking bag will shorten cooking time.
- A stuffed turkey will take longer to cook than an unstuffed turkey.
- Ovens may heat unevenly.
- The oven rack position can have an effect on even cooking and heat circulation.

OPTIONAL STEPS:

- Tuck wing tips back under shoulders of turkey.
- Add ½ cup water to the bottom of the pan.
- A tent of aluminum foil may be placed loosely over the turkey for the first 1 to 1 ½ hours, then removed for browning. Or, a tent of foil may be placed over the turkey after the turkey reaches the desired golden brown.
- For quality, you may choose to let the turkey stand 20 minutes before removing the stuffing and carving.

APPROXIMATE COOKING TIMES

Time charts are based on fresh or completely thawed turkeys at a refrigerator temperature of 40 ° F or below. Frozen or partially thawed turkeys will take longer to cook. The cooking time for a frozen turkey will take at least 50 percent longer than the time recommended for a fully thawed turkey. These cooking times are guidelines only. Use a food thermometer to determine safe doneness.

UNSTUFFED

4 to 6 lbs breast	1 ½ to 2 ¼ hrs
6 to 8 lbs breast	2 ¼ to 3 ¼ hrs
8 to 12 lbs	2 ¾ to 3 hrs
12 to 14 lbs	3 to 3 ¾ hrs
14 to 18 lbs	3 ¾ to 4 ¼ hrs
18 to 20 lbs	4 ¼ to 4 ½ hrs
20 to 24 lbs	4 ½ to 5 hrs

STUFFED

8 to 12 lbs	3 to 3 ½ hrs
12 to 14 lbs	3 ½ to 4 hrs
14 to 18 lbs	4 to 4 ¼ hrs
18 to 20 lbs	4 ¼ to 4 ¾ hrs
20 to 24 lbs	4 ¾ to 5 ¼ hrs

Note: Turkeys purchased stuffed and frozen with the USDA or state mark of inspection on the packaging are safe because they have been processed under controlled conditions. These turkeys should not be thawed before cooking. Follow package directions for handling.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline:

1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)

1-800-256-7072 (TTY)

E-mail: mphotline.fsis@usda.gov

FSIS Website: www.fsis.usda.gov

*Source: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service Information for Consumers
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For more information contact:

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NDSU
Extension Service

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TURKEY BASICS:



“THE BIG THAW”

Turkeys must be kept at a safe temperature during thawing. While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely. However, if the turkey is allowed to thaw at a temperature above 40 ° F, any harmful bacteria that may have been present before freezing can begin to grow again unless proper thawing methods are used.

A package of frozen meat or poultry thawing on the counter longer than 2 hours is not safe. Even though the center of the package may still be frozen, the outer layer of the food is in the “danger zone,” between 40 and 140 ° F – a temperature range where harmful bacteria multiply rapidly.

There are three safe ways to thaw food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave oven.

THAWING FROZEN TURKEYS

Immediately after grocery store checkout, take the frozen turkey home and store it in the freezer until ready to use. Frozen turkeys should not be thawed on the back porch, in the car trunk, in the basement or on the kitchen counter.

It is safe to cook an unstuffed frozen turkey. The cooking time will take at least 50 percent longer than recommended for a fully thawed turkey.

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REFRIGERATOR THAWING

When thawing a turkey in the refrigerator, plan ahead. For every 5 pounds of turkey, allow approximately 24 hours of thawing time in a refrigerator set at 40 ° F.

Refrigerator Thawing Times (Whole turkey)

8 to 12 pounds.....	1 to 2 days
12 to 16 pounds	2 to 3 days
16 to 20 pounds	3 to 4 days
20 to 24 pounds	4 to 5 days

Foods thawed in the refrigerator can be safely refrozen without cooking, though there may be some loss of quality.

MICROWAVE THAWING

Follow the manufacturer's instructions when thawing a turkey in the microwave oven. Plan to cook it immediately after thawing because some areas of the turkey may become warm and begin to cook during microwave thawing.

COLD WATER THAWING

Allow about 30 minutes per pound when thawing a turkey in cold water. Be sure the turkey is in leak-proof packaging. Tissues can absorb water like a sponge, resulting in a watery product.

Submerge the turkey in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed.

Cold Water Thawing Times

8 to 12 pounds.....	4 to 6 hours
12 to 16 pounds	6 to 8 hours
16 to 20 pounds	8 to 10 hours
20 to 24 pounds	10 to 12 hours

Turkeys thawed by the cold water method should be cooked immediately because conditions were not temperature controlled.

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