


Food for Thought

November 2023


Turkey Tips


Safely storing, cooking, and serving your Thanksgiving turkey, will make your holiday celebration not only enjoyable, but safe for you and your family.



 **Be sure to give your turkey enough time to thaw.** Turkeys can be safely thawed in two ways: in the refrigerator or in cold water. A 12-pound turkey can take at least three days in the refrigerator to thaw. Bigger turkeys will take longer. **Never thaw a turkey at room temperature.** You may also thaw a turkey by putting the plastic wrapped bird in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes to make sure the water stays cold. Thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for one to two days.

Size of Turkey	Thawing Time in Refrigerator (40°F) <i>Approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds (whole turkey)</i>	Thawing Time in Cold Water <i>Approximately 30 minutes per pound (whole turkey)</i> (Change water every ½ hour)
8-12 pounds	2-3 days	4-6 hours
12-16 pounds	3-4 days	6-8 hours
16-20 pounds	4-5 days	8-10 hours
20-24 pounds	5-6 days	10-12 hours

 **It is not recommended** to rinse your turkey as it can spread harmful bacteria in your kitchen due to the splatter. If you choose to rinse, clean your sink and the surrounding countertop with cleanser and sanitizer. Remember to remove the bag of giblets before cooking.

 **Roast!** Place your turkey in a shallow roasting pan. Add one inch of water to the pan and cover with aluminum foil. Roast in 325°F oven. Add more water if needed while cooking.


 **How long should I cook the turkey?**


Size of turkey	Cooking Time
8-12 pounds	2 ¾ - 3 hours
12-14 pounds	3 - 3 ¾ hours
14-18 pounds	3 ¾ - 4 ¼ hours
18-20 pounds	4 ¼ - 4 ½ hours
20-24 pounds	4 ½ - 5 hours


Call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or FSIS website with food safety info: www.fsis.usda.gov
E-mail: MPHotline@usda.gov



Note: These cooking times are for an unstuffed turkey. For best results and food safety, cook the turkey and stuffing separately.

 **Never partially cook a turkey** and then refrigerate to finish cooking later. Bacteria can grow on the turkey and cause foodborne illness.

 **Use a thermometer.** The temperature should reach a minimum of 165°F in the thigh before removing from the oven.

 **Storing leftovers.** De-bone turkey and refrigerate all leftovers in shallow containers within two hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within three to four days, gravy within one to two days, or freeze food in dated containers. For best quality, use frozen stuffing, turkey or gravy within four months. Thoroughly reheat refrigerated or frozen leftovers to a temperature of 165°F. Bones can be refrigerated or frozen and used to make broth for soup.

