

# Cooking a Holiday Turkey



Tips for how to prepare and enjoy a delicious turkey meal in any season.

## HOW TO BUY A TURKEY

**Frozen:** We recommend allocating 3/4 to 1 lb. per person for an 8-12 lb. turkey. Bigger turkeys (over 12 lbs.) have more meat. Keep frozen until ready to thaw.

**Frozen pre-stuffed:** Allocate 1 & 1/4 lbs. per person. Keep frozen until ready to cook. **DO NOT THAW.**

**Fresh:** Allocate 1 lb. per person. Buy one to two days before cooking.

## HOW TO THAW A TURKEY

There are three ways to thaw a turkey:

1. In the refrigerator
2. In the microwave
3. In cold water

**Refrigerator** (for frozen, unstuffed turkeys only): Keep the turkey in its original wrapper and place on a pan or tray in the refrigerator below 40 degrees F) for at least 24 hours for each 4 to 5 lbs. Once thawed, the turkey can stay in the refrigerator for up to two days before cooking.

**Microwave:** Check your microwave's manual for the minutes per lb. of bird and the power setting to use for thawing. Remove all outside wrapping and the giblets and neck from the cavity. Place turkey on a microwave-safe dish when thawing. Cook the turkey directly after thawing in the microwave.

**Cold water:** Allow approx. 30 minutes per lb. Keep the turkey in its original wrapper and seal it in an airtight bag. Submerge the wrapped bird in cold tap water in a deep sink or in an ice chest. Once thawed, cook immediately or store in the refrigerator for up to two days.

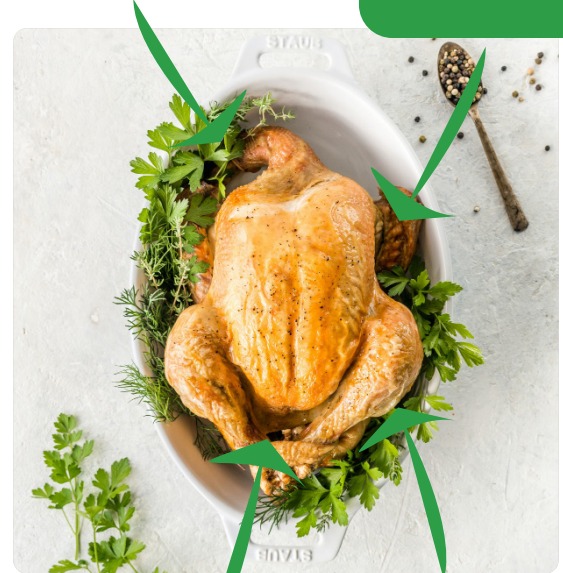
## READY-TO-EAT TURKEY DINNER

- For a ready-prepared turkey dinner, if picked up or delivered hot, keep the turkey temperature at 140 degrees F. or eat within 2 hours.
- If you plan to save the turkey longer than 2 hours, remove all stuffing from the cavity, cut the turkey into smaller pieces and store in shallow containers. Preheat the turkey to 165 degrees F. before serving.
- If you receive a whole cooked turkey, carve the cooked meat and then heat up in pieces before serving.
- If the cooked turkey has a USDA inspection seal, follow the instructions for reheating and storing your turkey.

### NECK CAVITY

(where the giblets are)

### WINGS



### MAIN CAVITY

(where the neck is)

### LEGS

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## HOW TO PREPARE A TURKEY

**Roasting:** Wash hands with soap and water and then remove the wrapper from the thawed turkey. Remove the giblets and neck from the cavities to cook separately. Do not wash the raw bird. Set your oven to 325 degrees F or higher and place the turkey on a roasting pan and then on a rack in the oven.

**Stuffing:** The USDA does not recommend stuffing a turkey. Stuffing prolongs the baking time and prevents uniform cooking, which may not allow the meat to reach a high enough temperature to kill bacteria that causes food poisoning.



## ROASTING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the turkey with breast-side up in a shallow roasting pan. Tuck in wings and legs to prevent overcooking. You can use string, metal or wooden skewers, or round toothpicks to tie down the wings and legs.
2. Place a meat thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh. Or, use an instant read thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey at intervals throughout the roasting process.
3. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.
4. If you'd like your turkey to have a browned outer skin, place aluminum foil over the turkey for the first 1-1&1/2 hours of roasting. Make sure foil is completely sealed and is not touching the turkey.
5. A whole turkey is ready to eat when cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees F. Check the temperature in the thickest part of the breast of the turkey.
6. Remove your turkey from the oven once it is cooked and let it sit for 20 minutes to cool.
7. Turkeys can also be cooked in a covered roasting pan or an electric roaster.

## ROASTING CHART FOR FRESH OR THAWED TURKEY

UNSTUFFED	TIME	STUFFED	TIME
8 – 12 lbs.	2.75 to 3 hours	8 – 12 lbs.	3 to 3.5 hours
12 – 14 lbs.	3 to 3.75 hours	12 – 14 lbs.	3 to 4.5 hours
14 – 18 lbs.	3.75 to 4.25 hours	14 – 18 lbs.	4 to 4.25 hours
18 – 20 lbs.	4.25 to 5 hours	18 – 20 lbs.	4.25 to 4.75 hours
20 – 24 lbs.	4.5 to 5 hours	20 – 24 lbs.	4.75 to 5.25 hours