

## Commodity Frozen Turkey – Teacher Guide

**Objective:** To teach how to creatively use commodity frozen turkey in recipes and how to handle, prepare and store frozen turkey.

**Icebreaker:** Ask participants: *“What is your favorite turkey recipe?” “What do you do with turkey leftovers?”*

Share with participants:

*“We will spend time talking about how to serve turkey and turkey leftovers but first let’s take some time to talk about cooking turkey.”*

Read the Turkey Questions to your participants. But first share with participants: *“I am going to read to you several questions concerning cooking turkey. Just listen to the questions and don’t shout out the answers. If you do not know the answers that’s OK because it will be fun and interesting to learn the answers in today’s lesson. At the end of today’s lesson, we will review the questions one more time to make sure everyone has learned the answers.”*

### Turkey Questions

**T or F** 1. A turkey will cook faster in a dark roasting pan.

**True** *A turkey will cook faster in a dark roasting pan.*

**T or F** 2. Thaw your turkey on the kitchen counter.

**False** *When ready to use frozen turkey, take out of freezer and thaw in refrigerator in original wrapper. Place on a plate or platter to catch drips in a refrigerator that maintains 40°F. Set on lowest shelf away from other foods. Turkey will defrost in 1 to 5 days depending on its weight (8-24 pounds).*

**T or F** 3. If the turkey has a “pop-up” temperature indicator, it is also recommended that a meat thermometer be used.

**True** *If the turkey has a “pop-up” temperature indicator, it is also recommended that a meat thermometer be used. If the turkey is stuffed, it is very important to check the stuffing temperature to make sure the stuffing reaches 165°F. Even if the thigh meat temperature has reached 180°F, continue cooking turkey until stuffing reaches 165°F.*

**T or F** 4. The temperature of the innermost thigh of a turkey must reach 160°F to be considered done.

**False** *The temperature of the innermost thigh of a turkey must reach 180°F to be considered done.*

**T or F** 5. Leftover turkey can be safely stored in the refrigerator for over a week.

**False** *Leftover turkey will keep safely in the refrigerator for only 3-4 days.  
Freeze leftover turkey if you need to keep it longer.*

Share with participants: ***“Today we are going to talk about ways to prepare frozen commodity turkey. The safest way to thaw a turkey is in the refrigerator.”***

### **How to Handle Frozen Turkey Safely:**

- Keep frozen at 0°F or below until ready to use.
- For best quality, use frozen turkey within 6 months. Date the package before putting in your home freezer.
- When ready to use, take out of freezer and thaw in refrigerator in original wrapper. Place on a plate or platter to catch drips in a refrigerator that maintains 40°F. Set on lowest shelf away from other foods. Turkey will defrost in 1 - 5 days depending on its weight (8-24 pounds).

#### **Refrigerator Thawing Times:**

<b>8 to 12 lbs.</b>	<b>1 to 2 days</b>
<b>12 to 16 lbs.</b>	<b>2 to 3 days</b>
<b>16 to 20 lbs.</b>	<b>3 to 4 days</b>
<b>20 to 24 lbs</b>	<b>4 to 5 days</b>

- Do not thaw turkey at room temperature.
- When ready to cook, wash turkey in cold water and drain.

Ask participants: ***“Do you have a difficult time figuring out how long it will take to cook your turkey so you know how to plan the rest of your meal?”***

## **Roasting Turkey**

### **Oven Directions:**

Set oven temperature at 325°F. For tenderness and doneness use a meat thermometer to determine when correct meat temperature has been reached. Cook whole turkey so the innermost thigh temperature reaches 180°F. When cooking only a turkey breast roast, the temperature needs to reach 170°F in the center of the roast.

**Approximate Cooking Times:** Oven temperature 325°F, turkey completely thawed, **unstuffed.**

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

## **MORE FOOD SAFETY TIPS you will want to discuss:**

- Never partially cook turkey to finish cooking later because any bacteria present wouldn't have been destroyed.
- When testing for doneness, rubbery pink meat and pink juices are signs that the turkey needs additional cooking. Turkey thigh meat needs to reach 180°F or turkey breast needs to reach 170°F and the juices run clear to be safe to eat.
- Cooking a stuffed turkey is riskier than cooking a turkey not stuffed. The safest way to cook stuffing is in a 325°F oven in a casserole dish. Insert a meat thermometer into the center of the stuffing. When it reaches 165°F it is safe to eat. If you insist on stuffing a turkey, make sure the stuffing reaches 165°F. Even if the thigh meat temperature has reached 180°F, continue cooking turkey until stuffing reaches 165°F.
- **Turkey Leftovers** Refrigerate turkey leftovers within 2 hours of coming out of the oven. Store in shallow containers with a cover. Leftover turkey should be eaten within 3 to 4 days and stuffing and gravy in 1 to 2 days. If you need to store leftover turkey, gravy and stuffing longer than recommended times, freeze leftovers. Reheat leftovers to 165°F.

**Ask participants: “How do you roast your turkey?”**

## **MORE COOKING TIPS:**

- A turkey that is frozen or partially frozen will take longer (50% longer) to cook than a completely thawed turkey.
- A turkey will cook faster in a dark roasting pan.
- Putting a lid on a roasting pan speeds up cooking.
- The use of a foil tent for the entire cooking time can slow cooking. It is recommended to use an aluminum foil tent the first hour or two then remove for browning. Another option is to place foil tent over turkey after it has browned.
- An oven cooking bag will shorten cooking time.
- A stuffed turkey will take longer to cook than an unstuffed turkey.
- The position of the oven rack can have an effect on even cooking and heat circulation.

Ask participants: *“What kind of recipes do you prepare with your turkey, stuffing and gravy leftovers?”*

## **Turkey Leftovers**

Turkey meat makes great leftover meals. Turkey can be included in most meat recipes. Listed below are some suggestions but feel free to create your own.

- Cold and hot rice and pasta dishes

- Tacos and enchiladas
- Salads
- Chili
- Barbecue sandwiches

**ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS:**

- 1 Look at the “Refrigerator Thawing Times” and “Approximate Cooking Times” handout. Discuss how this will impact meal planning.
- 2 Discuss different ways turkey can be prepared for meals. Encourage participants to exchange recipes and cooking ideas.
- 3 Discuss creative recipes for turkey leftovers. Encourage participants to exchange recipes and cooking ideas.



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