

Thawing the Turkey Safely

There are three ways to safely thaw a turkey.

1. Thaw the turkey in the refrigerator

Place the turkey, in its original wrap, on a tray or in a pan to catch raw turkey juices that may leak as it thaws. Once thawed, the turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1-2 days before cooking.

2. Thaw the turkey in cold water

Wrap turkey so water will not leak into bag. Place turkey in sink and cover with **cold** water. The water needs to be changed every 30 minutes. **Cook turkey immediately after it is thawed. DO NOT refreeze.**

Thawing time:

Wt. in lbs.	In the Refrigerator	In Cold Water
4 to 12 lbs.	1 to 3 days	4 to 6 hrs.
12 to 16 lbs.	3 to 4 days	6 to 8 hrs.
16 to 20 lbs.	4 to 5 days	8 to 10 hrs.
20 to 24 lbs.	5 to 6 days	10 to 12 hrs.

3. Turkeys can also be thawed in a microwave oven.

Check the manufacturer's instructions for the turkey size that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. **A turkey thawed in the microwave should be cooked as soon as it is thawed.**

Never thaw a turkey on the kitchen counter.

Preparing to Cook

After the turkey is thawed, remove the giblets (heart, liver, gizzard) and neck from the body cavity, and be sure to check the neck cavity.

REMEMBER! Always wash hands, utensils, the sink, and anything else that comes in contact with raw turkey and its juices with soap and water.

Roasting the Turkey

For optimum safety, stuffing a turkey is not recommended. Cook stuffing outside the bird in a casserole dish. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the stuffing that must reach a safe *minimum* internal temperature of 165 °F.

Oven-roasting is the method of choice. Place the turkey breast-side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Lightly oil skin and season to taste. For some portion of the cooking time it is recommended you cover the pan with a lid or a loose tent of aluminum foil to prevent skin from over cooking and to keep the turkey moist. When uncovered the turkey skin can brown to your liking.

Roast at 325°F until a *minimum* internal temperature of 165 °F is reached as measured with a food thermometer. For reasons of personal preference, turkey may be cooked to a higher temperature. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. If your turkey has a "pop-up" temperature indicator, it is recommended that you also check the internal temperature of the turkey with a food thermometer.

Timetable for cooking fresh or thawed *unstuffed* turkey:

(Note: If using an **oven cooking bag**, follow the cooking instructions that come with the bag.)

Weight in Pounds	Roasting Time (hours)
8 to 12 lbs.	2 3/4 to 3 hrs.
12 to 14 lbs.	3 to 3 3/4 hrs.
14 to 18 lbs.	3 3/4 to 4 1/4 hrs.
18 to 20 lbs.	4 1/4 to 4 1/2 hrs.
20 to 24 lbs.	4 1/2 to 5 hrs.

To make the meat juicier and easier to carve, allow the roasted bird to stand, loosely covered for 20 minutes before slicing and serving.

Carving

When carving a turkey, be sure all equipment and utensils are clean.

Leftovers

Keep turkey, broth, and giblets either hot, above 140°F or cold, under 40°F until served. All leftovers should be refrigerated immediately, in shallow containers, following the meal. Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days and gravy in 1-2 days. Leftovers may be frozen. Use frozen leftovers within 2-6 months for best quality.

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This material was funded by USDA's Food Stamp Program.

Turkey Safety



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