

## 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.

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### Timetable for cooking fresh or thawed *unstuffed* turkey:

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

<b>Weight in Pounds</b>	<b>Roasting Time (hours)</b>
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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