



Extension Nutrition Programs

FSNE / EFNEP

Turkey Dinner: Let's Talk Turkey

Keep turkey frozen until ready to use. It takes a long time to defrost a turkey, so plan ahead.

Two Ways to Safely Defrost Turkey

Defrosting in the refrigerator:

Place frozen turkey on a baking pan or platter so that drippings will not get onto other foods. It takes about 24 hours for every 4 pounds of turkey to defrost in the refrigerator. How long will your turkey take to thaw?

Thawing Times

8-12 pounds 1 to 2 days
 12-16 pounds 2 to 3 days
 16-20 pounds 3 to 4 days

Defrosting in cold water:

Be sure your sink is clean. Make sure the turkey is in a leak proof package of plastic bag. Fill your sink or a large pan with cold water – enough to cover the turkey. Place the turkey in the water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed.

Thawing Times

8-12 pounds 4 to 6 hours
 12-16 pounds 6 to 8 hours
 16-20 pounds 8 to 10 hours

The turkey should be cooked immediately after thawing.

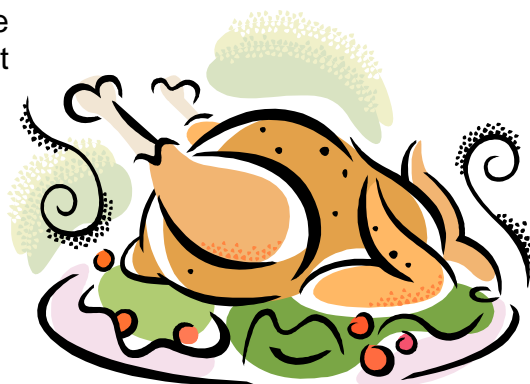
Preparing a Turkey for Cooking

1. Remove package. Remove neck and giblets from cavities. Rinse inside and outside with cold water; drain well.
2. If stuffing is desired, stuff the turkey just before roasting.
3. Heat oven to 325°F. Place the turkey breast side up in an open shallow pan.
4. Follow the approximate time guidelines on next page. The turkey is cooked when its juice is clear in color and when it reaches 180°F. Move the drumstick up and down – if done, the joint should give readily or break. Each turkey cooks a little differently. Using a meat thermometer is best.
5. Wash hands, sink, counter and anything else that has touched the raw turkey or had turkey juice on it. Use **hot** water and soap. A bleach solution could be

used to disinfect. The bacteria that was on the turkey could get onto the cooked turkey or other foods. This can cause food borne illness, so keep everything **clean**.

Approximate Cooking Times for Turkey

<u>Size</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Turkey Breast: 6 to 8 pounds	2¼ - 3¼
Whole Turkey: 8-12 pounds	2¾ - 3
12-14 pounds	3 - 3¾
14-18 pounds	3¾ - 4¼
18-20 pounds	4¼ - 4½
20-24 pounds	4½ - 5
Whole Turkey with Stuffing: 8-12 pounds	3 - 3½
12-14 pounds	3½ - 4
14-18 pounds	4 - 4¼
18-20 pounds	4¼ - 4¾



Stuffing

If you stuff the turkey, stuff it loosely. It takes longer to cook a stuffed turkey. Stuffing can be cooked separately in an hour.

Bread Stuffing

Yield: 10 servings •

Serving: 1 cup

- ¾ cup minced onion
- 1½ cups chopped celery (stalks and leaves)
- 1 cup butter or margarine, **or** ¼ cup butter plus ¾ cup broth or water
- 9 cups soft bread cubes
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 ½ teaspoons crushed sage leaves
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- ½ teaspoon pepper

1. In a large skillet, cook and stir onion and celery in butter, margarine **or** butter/broth combination until onion is tender.
2. Stir in about 1 cup of the bread cubes.
3. Pour the mixture into a deep bowl. Add the remaining ingredients and toss.
4. Stuff turkey just before roasting. Makes enough stuffing for a 12 pound turkey.
5. Stuffing can be cooked separately. Cover with foil and cook for 1 hour at 350°F.

PER SERVING: CALORIES 256 • FAT 20 G • PROTEIN 3 G • CARBOHYDRATE 18 G • FIBER 1 G

To Roast a Turkey

Set oven temperature to 325°F. Place the turkey in a pan. A wire rack can be used to keep turkey from sticking to the pan. Keep moist by making a tent with aluminum foil. Loosely place it over the turkey. Keep it on for the first 1 to 3 hours. Remove foil to let turkey brown.

NEVER cook a turkey on a lower temperature. Do not cook part way one day and finish cooking the next.

Turkey Gravy

Yield: 8 servings •

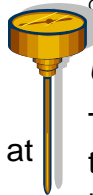
Serving: ¼ cup

- ¼ to 1 cup all-purpose flour
 - ¼ cup turkey pan drippings
 - 2 cups water
 - 2 teaspoons **or** 2 cubes bouillon (optional)
1. In a medium skillet over medium heat, stir flour into drippings.
 2. Cook and stir until dark brown.
 3. Stir in water and bouillon; cook and stir until thickened and bouillon dissolves.

PER SERVING: CALORIES 30 • FAT 1 G • PROTEIN 2 G • CARBOHYDRATE 3 G • FIBER 0 G

Use a Meat Thermometer

The best way to know if the turkey is done is to use a meat thermometer. The temperature should reach 180°F (or 165°F in the center



of the stuffing inside the turkey). Cook a turkey breast to 170°F. If you do not have a thermometer, use a fork to poke the turkey in a few places. The turkey juices should be clear with no pink color. When the turkey is done, remove from oven. Let it stand 15 to 20 minutes before removing the stuffing and slicing. This makes it easier to slice. Serve the turkey within an hour after cooking.

Turkey Leftovers

Do not let the turkey stay at room temperature for more than 2 hours.

Cooked turkey keeps 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator. Freeze whatever you will not use within the recommended time. Cooked, frozen turkey will keep 4 months.



Go to www.montana.edu/nep for a complete list of FSNE/EFNEP recipes.

Adapted from "Turkey Basics," Consumer Information from USDA, FSIS, November 1998, and "Let's Talk Turkey – Facts about Food Safety," University of Connecticut Extension Service. For more turkey information, contact the USDA Turkey Hotline at 1-800-535-4555.

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