Allow 3/4 to 1 pound per serving from an 8-12 pound turkey. Larger birds (over 12 pounds) have more meat, so allow 1/2 to 3/4 pound per serving.

Frozen Turkey
Keep frozen until 1-5 days before cooking, then thaw.

Fresh Turkey
Cook within 1-2 days. Pre-stuffed, fresh turkey is a safety hazard because bacteria multiply rapidly. **DO NOT BUY PRE-STUFFED FRESH TURKEY.**

Frozen Pre-Stuffed Turkey
Keep frozen until ready to cook. **DO NOT THAW.** Allow 1 1/4 pound per person. Note: use only stuffed, frozen turkeys that have the USDA or state mark of inspection on the packaging.

Pre-Cooked Turkey
If the local deli cooks your turkey, plan to serve it within 2 hours of removal from the oven. Carve the meat off the bird, reheat in the microwave or refrigerate it in small, shallow containers.

Traveling with Cooked Turkey
If you are traveling with the cooked bird, cook it the day before, without stuffing, take it off the bone, and refrigerate immediately. Travel with it on ice.

Thawing a Turkey
**DO NOT** thaw poultry or meat at room temperature. Bacteria multiply quickly on the warm surface. Leave turkey in original packaging and use one of the following methods:

* No Hurry. Place wrapped turkey on tray in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days; allow 5 hours per pound of turkey to completely thaw.

* Fast. Place wrapped turkey in deep pan or clean sink. Cover with cold water. Allow 30 minutes for each pound of turkey to completely thaw. Change water every half-hour. Refrigerate when thawed or roast immediately.

Cook the thawed turkey within two days. Re-freezing thawed turkey is not recommended because the quality is lowered.

NOTE: if you thaw the turkey in the microwave, plan to cook it right away. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for thawing times.

Preparing for Roasting
Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling raw poultry.

Remove plastic wrap from thawed turkey. Remove giblets and neck from the body and neck cavities. Tie down or tuck in legs and wing tips to prevent overcooking. String, metal skewers, or round toothpicks can be used.

**Do not wash the poultry.** Washing scatters bacteria that may contaminate other foods. (Proper cooking kills bacteria that may be on raw poultry.) Clean the area with hot, soapy water - then sanitize by wiping with a solution of 1 teaspoon chlorine bleach in 1 quart of water. Wash dirty cutting boards, knives and other equipment with hot, soapy water.

Roasting the Turkey
Set oven temperature no lower than 325° F. Place turkey, breast up, on a rack in a roasting pan. Insert oven-safe meat thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh next to the body, not touching bone. Do not interrupt the cooking process. Bacteria multiply rapidly at lower temperatures.

Baste occasionally with broth or fruit juices. When the turkey begins to brown, cover it loosely with foil to prevent over-browning. If a covered roaster is used, check frequently to test for doneness. During the last hour of roasting, remove the lid to brown the bird.

Turkey is done when the thermometer registers 165° F. in the thigh. Also, juices should be clear, not pink when thigh muscle is pierced with a fork.
**Approximate Roasting Times for Turkey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight (pounds)</th>
<th>Unstuffed (hours)</th>
<th>Stuffed (hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 to 12</td>
<td>2 ¾ to 3</td>
<td>3 to 3½</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 to 14</td>
<td>3 to 3 ¾</td>
<td>3½ to 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 to 18</td>
<td>3 ¾ to 4</td>
<td>4 to 4 ¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 20</td>
<td>4 ¼ to 4 ½</td>
<td>4 ¼ to 4 ¼</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24</td>
<td>4 ½ to 5</td>
<td>4 ¾ to 5 ¼</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Roasting time will vary according to oven type and temperature, degree of thawing and roasting pan used. Begin checking for doneness about one hour before end of recommended roasting time.

If you do not have a thermometer, test the drumstick by pressing it with your fingers. It should feel soft. Turn the drumstick. The joint should move easily. The juices should be clear, not pink.

If the turkey has a "pop-up" temperature indicator, it is also recommended that a food thermometer be used to test the temperature in the innermost part of the thigh.

**Before Carving**

Cool turkey about 20 minutes – the meat becomes firm and slices better. This is the time to make gravy and finish other meal preparations.

**Stuffing**

For safety and uniform doneness of the turkey, cook stuffing separately in a casserole. Use a food thermometer to check that the internal temperature of the stuffing has reached 165°F.

If you choose to stuff a turkey, you must use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey and the stuffing. The temperature of the whole turkey must reach 165°F in the innermost part of the thigh and the center of the stuffing must reach 165°F.

If you choose to stuff the turkey, lightly fill the cavities with the stuffing mix. If it is packed too tightly it takes too long to raise the temperature to a safe level. Begin cooking the turkey immediately after stuffing. (Do not refrigerate a stuffed turkey).

**Storing Leftovers**

Refrigerate all cooked foods within 2 hours of removing from heat (oven or stovetop). If you stuffed the bird, remove stuffing right after cooking. Within 2 hours, the stuffing needs to be refrigerated in small, shallow containers that allow it to cool rapidly. Gravy needs to be refrigerated in separate small containers. Use refrigerated stuffing and gravy within 1-2 days, or freeze.

While turkey is still warm, the meat is easily removed from the bone. Divide turkey into small portions and store in several small containers in the refrigerator. For best quality use refrigerated turkey within 3-4 days or freeze.

**Freezing Turkey and Leftovers**

Package and freeze turkey, dressing, and gravy. Use within one month for better quality. Gravy or broth covering cooked turkey will keep it moist longer, so it could be frozen 2-4 months.

**Reheating Turkey and Leftovers**

Reheat leftovers until "steamy hot" (165°F). Bring gravy to rolling boil before serving. Reheat sliced cooked turkey in a tightly covered baking dish, at 325°F., about 5 minutes per pound. If covered with gravy or broth, allow more time for heating.

**Other Questions?**

**USDA MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE**

1-800-535-4555

Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Recorded information 24 hours a day


Or call your local Extension office.

*Revised by Anne Hoisington, OSU Extension Faculty*

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