



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

Frozen Turkey

Keep frozen until 2-5 days before cooking, then thaw.

Fresh Turkey

Buy your fresh turkey 1-3 days before you plan to cook it. **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 5 days; allow 5 hours per pound of turkey to completely thaw. Time will vary depending how cold your refrigerator is and size of bird. Check daily.

Fast. Place wrapped turkey in large ice chest or clean sink. Cover the turkey with cold water. Allow 30 minutes for each pound of turkey. Changing the water every half-hour will speed thawing. 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 wrap from thawed turkey. Remove giblets and neck packets from the body and neck cavities. (Cook separately.) 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 for a more moist bird. 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. Birds will cook faster in a roaster. 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*

Oven set at 325°F.

Weight (pounds)	Unstuffed (hours)	Stuffed (hours)
8 to 12	2 ¾ to 3	3 to 3½
12 to 14	3 to 3¾	3½ to 4
14 to 18	3¾ to 4¼	4 to 4¼
18 to 20	4¼ to 4½	4¼ to 4¾
20 to 24	4½ to 5	4¾ to 5¼

*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 inner most 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 and the center of the stuffing must reach 165°F to be safe.

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

Debone turkey and refrigerate all leftovers in shallow containers **WITHIN 2 HOURS OF COOKING**. For best quality use leftover turkey, stuffing and gravy within 3-4 days or freeze for 2-4 months. Reheat leftovers to a temperature of 165° F or until hot and steaming. **Discard any turkey, stuffing or gravy left out longer than 2 hours.**

Freezing Turkey and Leftovers

Package and freeze turkey, dressing, and gravy in meal size packages in freezer containers. Use within 2-4 months for best quality. Gravy or broth covering cooked turkey result in a moister product when thawed.

Turkey and Leftovers

Reheat leftovers until "steamy hot" (165° F). Bring gravy to a 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. Leftovers can also be heated in the microwave oven. Make sure the internal temperature reaches 165°F. Follow microwave oven instructions for reheating foods.

Other Questions?

USDA MEAT AND POULTRY HOTLINE 1-888-674-6854

Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Recorded information 24 hours a day

Email: mpholine.fsis@usda.gov

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Or call your local Extension office.

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