

Take the Guesswork Out of Roasting a Turkey



Buying a Turkey

Frozen

Allow 1 pound per person. Buy anytime, but keep frozen until ready to thaw.

(See Thawing a Turkey below.)

Frozen Pre-stuffed

Allow 1¼ pounds per person. Buy anytime, but keep frozen until ready to cook. **DO NOT THAW.**

Fresh

1 pound per person. Buy 1–2 days before cooking. **DO NOT BUY PRE-STUFFED.**

Thawing a Turkey

Thawing in the refrigerator (40°F): approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds (whole turkey).

8–12 pounds	1–2 days
12–16 pounds	2–3 days
16–20 pounds	3–4 days
20–24 pounds	4–5 days

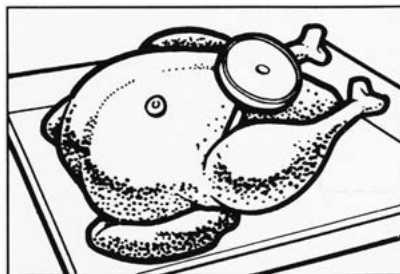
Thawing in cold water: approximately 30 minutes per pound (whole turkey).

8–12 pounds	4–6 hours
12–16 pounds	6–8 hours
16–20 pounds	8–10 hours
20–24 pounds	10–12 hours

(Change water every 30 minutes.)

After thawing, remove neck and giblets from neck and body cavities, wash turkey inside and out with cold water, and drain well. Thawed turkey may remain in refrigerator 1–2 days.

Thawing in the microwave: check manufacturer's instructions for the size turkey that will fit into your microwave, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. Cook immediately after thawing.



Wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come into contact with raw turkey. Use hot, soapy water.

Roasting a Turkey

Timetable for fresh or thawed turkey at 325°F. These times are approximate and should always be used in conjunction with a properly placed thermometer.

Unstuffed

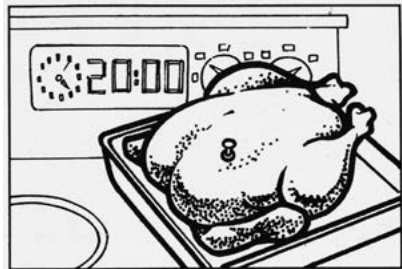
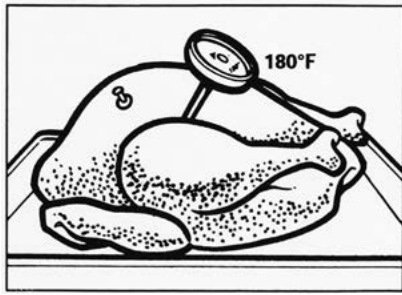
8–12 pounds	2¾–3 hours
12–14 pounds	3–3¾ hours
14–18 pounds	3¾–4¼ hours
18–20 pounds	4¼–4½ hours
20–24 pounds	4½–5 hours

Stuffed

8–12 pounds	3–3½ hours
12–14 pounds	3½–4 hours
14–18 pounds	4–4¼ hours
18–20 pounds	4¼–4¾ hours
20–24 pounds	4¾–5¼ hours

Roasting Instructions

1. Set the oven temperature no lower than 325°F.
2. Place turkey breast-side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.
3. For uniform results, cook stuffing outside the bird. If stuffed, stuff loosely.
4. For safety and doneness, the internal temperature (as registered on a meat thermometer) must reach a minimum of 180°F in the thigh before removing from the oven. The center of the stuffing should reach 165°F after stand time.
5. Juices should be clear.
6. Let stand 20 minutes before removing stuffing and carving.



5. Juices should be clear.
6. Let the breast stand 20 minutes before removing stuffing and carving.

Storing Leftovers

Debone turkey and refrigerate all leftovers in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3–4 days, gravy within 1–2 days, or freeze these foods. Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165°F or until hot and steaming.

Additional Roasting Hints

1. Tuck wing tips back under shoulders of bird, called “akimbo.”
2. Add ½ cup of water to the bottom of the pan.
3. A tent of aluminum foil may be placed over the turkey for the first 1–1½ hours, then removed for browning. Or a tent of foil may be placed over the turkey after the turkey has reached a golden brown.

Roasting a Turkey Breast

Timetable for fresh or thawed turkey breast at 325°F.

Unstuffed

4–6 pounds	1½–2¼ hours
6–8 pounds	2¼–3¼ hours

Stuffed

4–6 pounds	Not usually applicable
6–8 pounds	3–3½ hours

Roasting Instructions

1. Set oven temperature no lower than 325°F.
2. Place turkey breast on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.
3. For uniform results, cook stuffing outside of the bird. If stuffed, stuff loosely.
4. For safety and doneness, the internal temperature (as registered on a meat thermometer) must reach a minimum of 170°F in the thickest part of the breast before removing from the oven. The center of the stuffing should reach 165°F after stand time.



4. In the beginning, an ovenproof thermometer may be placed in the thigh of the turkey to check the internal temperature at intervals during the roasting. Or an instant-read thermometer may be used periodically to check the internal temperature during cooking. After each use, wash the stem section of the thermometer thoroughly in hot, soapy water.
5. Check the pop-up temperature device periodically until the bird has reached the final temperature for safety and doneness. However, you should also check the temperature in several places with a conventional thermometer.

For more information about food safety, contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
1-888-MPHotline | 1-888-674-6854 | mphotline.fsis@usda.gov

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