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NF92-102 Turkey Basics

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Turkey Basics

Julie A. Albrecht, Extension Food Specialist

Buying A Turkey

Frozen

Buy anytime but keep frozen 1 to 5 days before cooking.
(See THAWING) 1 pound per person.

Frozen Pre-Stuffed

Buy anytime. Keep frozen until ready to cook. DO NOT
THAW. 1-1/4 pounds per person.

Fresh

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

Pre-Cooked

Bring the turkey home and serve within 1 to 2 hours.
1 pound per person.

Thawing A Turkey

Thawing Time in the Refrigerator (40° F)

Roughly 24 hours per 5 pounds (Whole turkey)

8 to 12 pounds 1 to 2 days

12 to 16 pounds 2 to 3 days

16 to 20 pounds 3 to 4 days

20 to 24 pounds 4 to 5 days

Thawing Time in Cold Water

Roughly 30 minutes per pound (Whole Turkey)
(Change water every 1/2 hour)

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

Thawing in the Microwave

Check the manufacturer's instructions for the size of turkey that will fit into your oven, the minutes per pound and the power level to use for thawing. Cook immediately after thawing.

After thawing, remove neck and giblets, wash the turkey inside and out with cold water, drain well.

WASH HANDS, UTENSILS, SINK AND EVERYTHING ELSE THAT HAS CONTACTED RAW TURKEY.

Stuffing A Turkey

Stuffing in the Turkey

Mix and stuff ingredients immediately before putting in the oven. Stuff lightly. Cooking time takes longer. Allow 3/4 cup stuffing per pound of turkey.

Stuffing Separate

If you are in a hurry, bake the stuffing in a greased, covered baking dish at 325° F for 45-60 minutes or until heated to 165° F.

Roasting A Turkey

Timetable for Fresh or Thawed Turkey at 325° F.

<i>Weight (pounds)</i>	<i>Unstuffed (hours)</i>	<i>Stuffed (hours)</i>
4 to 6 (breast)	1-1/2 to 2-1/4	Not applicable
6 to 8	2-1/4 to 3-1/4	3 to 3-1/2
8 to 12	3-1/4 to 4	3-1/2 to 4-1/2
12 to 16	4 to 4-1/2	4-1/2 to 5-1/2
16 to 20	4-1/2 to 5	5-1/2 to 6-1/2
20 to 24	5 to 5-1/2	6-1/2 to 7
24 to 28	5-1/2 to 6-1/2	7 to 8-1/2

Place turkey breast side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Insert meat thermometer in thigh. Do not add water. Cover the turkey with a loose tent of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Remove the foil 20-30 minutes before roasting is done. Final temperature for safety and doneness — 180° F in thigh; 165° F in stuffing. Juices should be clear, not pink.

When the turkey is done remove the stuffing. Let the bird stand 20 minutes for better carving. Then serve sliced turkey and stuffing.

Storing Your Leftovers

Debone the turkey and refrigerate all leftovers in small, shallow containers. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days; gravy within 1-2 days, or freeze these foods.

Source: *Food News for Consumers*, Holidays 1992.

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