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EC9922 Turkey -- A Family Favorite

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Turkey -- A FAMILY FAVORITE



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING
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LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

Turkey---A Family Favorite

TURKEY production is one of Nebraska's growing industries. Nebraska turkeys have achieved an enviable reputation for their fine quality. Because of fine quality and natural deliciousness, everyone enjoys a turkey dinner. Formerly, turkey was associated with the Thanksgiving feast, but because of improved methods of production and modern refrigeration, turkey has become available the year round. Why not serve turkey frequently and enjoy this home-grown product more often?

Selection of the Turkey

Turkeys are sold by grade, either freshly killed or frozen. Government grades are designated as prime, choice, and commercial. A prime young turkey has a full broad breast; the back, hips, and pin bones are fully covered with a layer of fat; the meat is fine grained and tender, and the skin clean and unbroken. If the bird is young, the breast bone will be flexible at the end, the feet soft and pliable, and the skin on the feet smooth and bright. In each succeeding grade, these desirable qualities are less prominent. Either a hen or tom turkey is a good selection; a hen has a wider and deeper breast.

In determining the size to be purchased, three-fourths to one pound of turkey, undrawn weight with head and feet on, is a generous allowance per person. A turkey loses about ten per cent of its weight when killed and picked and about fifteen per cent more when completely dressed and drawn, making a total loss of approximately twenty-five per cent of the live weight.

The market term "dressed" means that the bird has been killed and feathers removed. The term "ready to cook" means that the bird has been fully drawn and cleaned and is ready for use without further preparation. Turkeys so prepared may be either freshly killed or frozen.

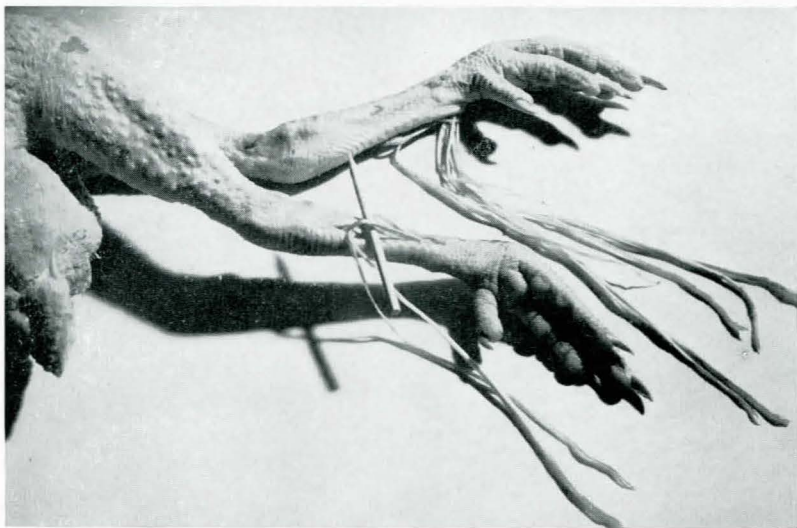
Cleaning

All cleaning on the outside of the bird should be done before the bird is drawn. Care should be taken not to permit cleaning materials to touch the inside flesh, because flavor may be impaired.

If the wing tip feathers have been left on, immerse them in boiling water for a few minutes and pull out with pliers. Pin feathers may be easily removed with a strawberry huller or tweezers. Singe carefully by holding over a flame and turn slowly. The outside skin may be washed thoroughly, with dry cornmeal or salt for a skin abrasive. If soap or soda is used, care must be taken to rinse the fowl thoroughly, and to keep the skin intact.

If the leg tendons are to be pulled out, this must be done before the feet are cut off.

The crop should be removed and the wishbone may be cut out. By making an incision down the center back of the neck and pulling the skin away from the neck, the neck may be cut off close to the body and



Remove leg tendons before roasting.

(Pictures used through courtesy of Institute of American Poultry Industries.)

the crop and windpipe easily removed. The wishbone may be removed by pulling the neck skin back over the breast, cutting away each tip, slipping the knife along the bone on either side to the "fork", pulling it loose, and cutting it off. By removing the wishbone, the breast meat may be carved more advantageously.

The inside of the bird may be wiped out with a damp cloth. To prepare the giblets, clean the gizzard and remove the gall bladder from the liver, washing them thoroughly in cold water.

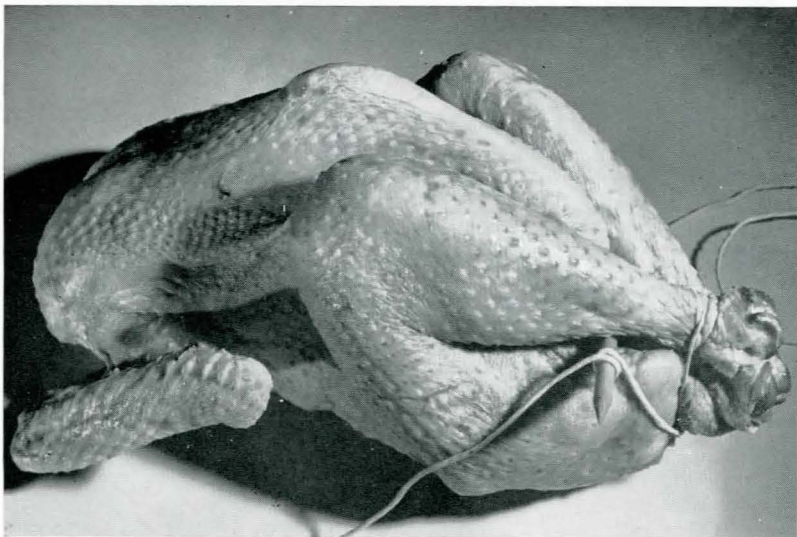
The busy homemaker may find it convenient to prepare the bird one or two days in advance, thus saving a last minute rush hour. This is good management if the turkey can be kept in a cold place until ready for cooking.

Stuffing

The stuffing may be done the day before if the turkey can be stored in a cool place. Fill the small cavity at the neck end, folding the skin over the back. Hold it in place with skewers or long steel-headed pins (1½-2 inches long), or with heavy toothpicks. Fill the body cavity, piling it in lightly so there will be room for expansion. This opening may be held together also with steel pins placed at regular intervals, and the skin edges laced together with cord. The inside cavity may be rubbed with salt before stuffing.

Trussing

Trussing gives the bird a compact shape and helps to prevent the drying out of thinner parts. It also adds to the attractiveness of the bird when it appears on the table.



Trussing is begun by first tying leg ends to tail piece.

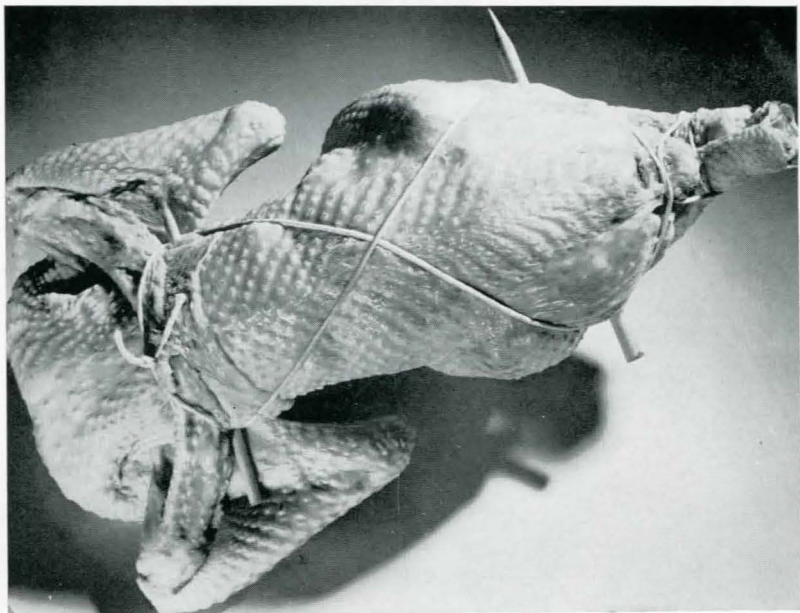
Fold the wings back to form a triangle with the wing tips caught under the back of the bird. A skewer may be inserted through the wings and the back. Using the center portion of a long firm cord, tie it firmly around the lower end of each drumstick, cross the drumsticks, and tie the ends together. Without cutting the cord, press the legs against the body, and then tie leg ends to the tail piece. Pull the string firmly as the bird is made compact. Insert skewers underneath the legs, as they do not need to be inserted through the flesh. Turn the bird on its breast, cross the string, and bring the ends up from the tail and draw around the leg skewers. Cross the strings over the back and again draw ends around each of the skewers through the wings. Hold string secure, and cut off ends.

A strip of white cloth dipped in melted fat may be wrapped around the leg ends, bringing it well up on the drumsticks, or the entire bird may be covered in a similar manner. Before putting it into the oven, the bird should be thoroughly brushed with melted, unsalted fat.

Roasting

Like the cooking of other meats, the methods of cooking turkey are based on tenderness. Turkeys which are under one year of age have little connective tissue, are tender, and give the most satisfaction when cooked by dry-heat methods such as roasting, broiling, or frying. Older turkeys are more satisfactory when cooked by moist-heat methods such as braising, stewing, and steaming.

Regardless of method used, low or moderate temperature (300°-350°) gives the best results. An excellent turkey may be turned into tough, dry,



Trussing means to tie the bird as compactly as possible to prevent drying out.

stringy meat if cooked at a high temperature. The lower temperature will produce a more juicy product but will require a longer cooking time.

In order to help determine the length of cooking time, the prepared bird may be weighed. A time table is merely a guide and not an exact method of determining how long to roast a turkey. A meat thermometer is the only exact way of determining "doneness." The thermometer is placed in the thigh muscle and the bird cooked until the internal temperature reaches 185° F.

Time Table Guide for Roasting of Turkey

Weight of Stuffed Bird	Average Total Cooking Time	Approximate Minutes per lb.
Small 6-10 lbs.	3-3½ hrs.	20-25 min.
Medium 10-15 lbs.	3½-4½ hrs.	18-20 min.
Large 18-25 lbs.	4½-6 hrs.	15-18 min.

To roast a young turkey, place the well greased bird on a rack with the breast down and back up, in an uncovered pan. It will not be necessary to change either temperature or position during the cooking period. Brush the surface with fat occasionally during the roasting period or a clean white cloth dipped in melted fat may be laid over the bird. If the cloth becomes dry, sprinkle fat over it. Toward the end of the cooking period remove the cloth so the skin will be beautifully browned. A mixture of melted butter with a little flour in it is often used for basting.



A cloth dipped in melted fat may be spread over the turkey.

If an older turkey is being cooked, the same general method may be used; however, the pan may be covered and the turkey steamed. Near the end of the cooking period the lid may be removed in order that browning may take place.

To test for doneness, move the leg by grasping the middle joint. If the joint moves easily, the ligaments in the joint are tender and the meat is done. The wing joint may be tested in the same way.

When ready to serve, remove skewers, steel pins, and cord while the bird is still in the pan. Transfer to a warmed platter with breast up and garnish with parsley. Paper frills may be applied to the leg bones if desired.

Carving a Turkey

A good carving set is the first essential. An eight- or nine-inch blade is recommended. The handle should be easy to grasp, and the blade should be long, thin, and sharp pointed. The fork should be strong with long tines and a guard.

It is necessary for the turkey to be on a large platter. Ample space is needed so that there is no danger of getting pieces of food on the tablecloth. The fowl should be on its back with its neck to the left. The carving fork is held in the left hand and inserted at the point of the breast bone. Cut off the right leg and thigh by cutting through the skin, pulling back the leg, and disjointing from the body. Lay the disjointed

leg on the platter and separate the drumstick from the thigh, cutting from the inside. The meat may be cut from the thigh bone so as to make more than one serving.

The wing is cut off next. Insert the knife under the wing and cut through the joint. The breast is next carved into thin slices. Cut across the grain on a slant from the breastbone down toward the wing.

Serve a piece of white and a piece of dark meat to each person unless a preference is expressed. Make an opening below the breastbone and serve dressing with each portion of fowl. After serving place the carving implements neatly on the platter. Before asking the guests to take a second helping, carve a few extra portions of meat. Avoid carving more than is needed, because cut meat dries out quickly.

Recipes

Actual proportions for dressing serve mainly as a guide. A good dressing has a pleasing moist quality, is well flavored, yet somewhat bland. Dressing expands during cooking so the fowl should not be stuffed too compactly.

Plain Dressing

2 qts. stale bread	$\frac{1}{4}$ t. pepper
2 t. salt	$\frac{1}{4}$ c. butter
1 t. ground sage	1 egg

Cut bread into one inch cubes and moisten with liquid (water, broth or milk). Melt butter in frying pan, add bread and stir until slightly browned. Place in a mixing bowl and add other ingredients.

Variations for Plain Dressing

1. Cook $\frac{1}{4}$ c. finely chopped onion in the butter before bread is added.
2. Add 1 c. finely sliced apples and 1 t. sugar.
3. Add 2 c. finely chopped celery. It may be either raw or partially cooked.
4. Add 1 pound chestnuts. To prepare: Place chestnuts in cold water to cover. Bring to boil and cook gently for five minutes. Drain, peel, and skin. Simmer in salted water if not tender. Chop coarsely.
5. Add 2 c. nut meats. Nuts may be browned lightly in 2 T. of butter.
6. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. mushrooms. Chop and cook slowly in 1 T. butter about five minutes.
7. Add one pint of drained oysters. They may be chopped or left whole if small, add raw or preheated in 2 T. of butter.

Crouton Dressing

$\frac{1}{2}$ c. butter	1 t. salt
8 c. stale bread cubes	$\frac{1}{4}$ t. pepper
$\frac{1}{2}$ c. minced onion	

Heat fat in large skillet, add bread cut in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch cubes, stir constantly and cook until bread is toasted to a delicate brown. Add onion and salt and combine. One-half cup water may be added with seasoning if a less crumbly dressing is desired.

Corn Bread Dressing

3 c. chopped celery	6 c. corn bread
2 T. chopped onion	Salt
4 eggs	Pepper

The corn bread used for this purpose should be made with no sugar in it. Chop the celery and onion finely and crumb the corn bread. Beat the eggs slightly and add. Mix well. Season to taste.

Corn Meal Dressing

4 c. bread cubes	2 c. chicken broth
1½ c. corn meal	2 small onions, chopped
1 c. finely chopped celery	1 T. poultry seasoning
1 egg, well beaten	Sage, salt, and pepper

Heat broth to boiling. Gradually add corn meal, stirring constantly. Cook ten minutes. Add bread, celery, onions, poultry seasoning, and egg. Season to taste. Mix thoroughly.

Giblet Gravy

Measure the fat from the cooked fowl, and add an equal amount of flour and blend. When browned, add one cup of liquid (milk) for each two tablespoons of flour used. Cook until thick and then add the giblets (heart, liver, and gizzard, which have been cut fine). The giblets may be baked in the pan beside the fowl or put through the meat chopper and simmered in a quart of unsalted water while the fowl is baking. If the latter is done, use this liquid in making the gravy.

Cold Turkey

Desirable ways to serve left-over turkey are cold sliced, in turkey salad, or creamed. However, there comes a time when there is only enough for hash. What remains may then be used for turkey hash, and the bones boiled for soup.

Turkey Hash

2 or 3 c. minced turkey	Onion chopped fine or onion juice
3 boiled potatoes (chopped fine)	Pepper
½ c. turkey dressing	Salt

Mix potatoes, minced turkey, dressing, and seasonings. Grease iron skillet and pat the hash in the pan. Cook over a low heat until a golden-brown crust is formed. Place a lid over skillet and invert pan so hash comes out on lid. Slip the uncooked side down into skillet and let brown. Turn on platter and garnish with parsley. Turkey hash may also be baked in a loaf pan.

Turkey Salad

2 c. cold diced turkey	1 T. chopped green pepper
1 c. diced celery	6 olives

Marinate turkey with 2 T. French dressing and allow to stand one hour. Add other ingredients and mix with ½ c. cooked or mayonnaise salad dressing. Arrange on lettuce leaf and garnish with pimento and hard cooked eggs.

Menus

Tomato Juice Cocktail		
Roast Turkey with Chestnut Dressing		
Mashed Potatoes	Giblet Gravy	
Brussels Sprouts		
Celery	Cranberry Sauce	Olives
Whole Wheat Rolls	Butter	
Raspberry Sherbet		
Milk	Coffee	
Grape Juice Cocktail		
Roast Turkey	Apple Stuffing	
Mashed Potatoes	Giblet Gravy	Buttered Onions
Orange and Cranberry Relish		
Ice Box Rolls	Butter	
Ice Cream	Cookies	
Coffee	Nuts	