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Turkey Talk



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Cent\$ible Nutrition Program

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Nutrition and Food Safety

Turkey Talk

was compiled by University of Wyoming Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators Darlene Christensen, Debbie Popp, Bonnie Ellenwood, and Jane Wolery in the fall of 1997. The publication was revised by Darlene Christensen, Utah State University Cooperative Extension Agent, in the fall of 2006. The University of Wyoming version was adapted and reviewed by Mindy Meuli, Suzy Pelican, Tressa M. Penrod, and Mary Kay Wardlaw in the fall of 2006.



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or

call the **USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline**

(English & Spanish) at

1-888-MPHOTLINE

(1-888-674-6854)

Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. (Mtn.)

On Thanksgiving Day from 6:00 a.m. - Noon

Or e-mail questions to

mphotonline.fsis@usda.gov

Visit the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture)
web site for other food safety information at:

www.usda.gov/fsis

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Sources

Countdown to Thanksgiving Holiday Fact Sheet. USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. 2006.

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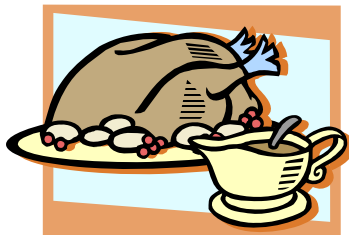


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Buying the Turkey

Frozen Whole Turkey

Allow 1 pound per person or 1¼ pounds for frozen, pre-stuffed turkey. Buy anytime, but keep turkey frozen until ready to thaw and cook.

Fresh Whole Turkey

Allow 1 pound per person. Buy 1-2 days before cooking.

We do not recommend purchasing a fresh pre-stuffed turkey.

Thawing the Turkey

Thawing time in the refrigerator (40°F or below)

Approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds of a whole turkey. After thawing, keep turkey refrigerated for only 1-2 days.

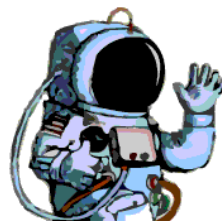
Pounds	Days
4 - 12	1 - 3 days
12 - 16	3 - 4 days
16 - 20	4 - 5 days

Thawing Time in Cold Water

Approximately 30 minutes per pound of a whole turkey. Change water every 30 minutes to maintain cold temperature. Cook immediately.

Pounds	Hours
8 - 12	4 - 6 hours
12 - 16	6 - 8 hours
16 - 20	8 - 10 hours
20 - 24	10 - 12 hours

The Tale of the Turkey



The first meal eaten on the moon by astronauts Neil Armstrong & Edwin Aldrin was roast turkey with all of the trimmings. But most turkey dinners are eaten here on Earth, the greatest number, of course, on Thanksgiving Day.

Virginians claim to have celebrated the first Thanksgiving on December 4, 1619, at Berkeley Plantation located southeast of Richmond on the James River.



Most people, however, associate the holiday with the pilgrims who ate their famous harvest meal with the Indians in 1620. Actually, they ate wild turkey.

Turkey is a wild native American bird that traveled to Europe to get domesticated and returned to our shores a plumper, more tender bird.



Benjamin Franklin thought the turkey should be the national bird, but perhaps others thought we should not eat our American symbol.



Turkey Tomato Vegetable Soup

- 1 quart turkey stock
- 1 quart stewed, unsalted tomatoes
- ½ cup barley
- 4 tsp. low-sodium chicken flavored bouillon granules
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- ½ tsp. dried oregano, crushed
- 1 tsp. dried basil, crushed
- 2 cups diced cooked turkey
- 1½ cups sliced carrots
- 1½ cups sliced celery
- 1 cup chopped onions
- 1 cup chopped green pepper
- 1 10-ounce package frozen okra

In a large saucepan, simmer stock, tomatoes, barley, bouillon granules, garlic powder, pepper, oregano, parsley and basil for 1 hour.

Add turkey, carrots, celery, onions, green pepper, and okra. Simmer 30 minutes or until vegetables are tender.

Makes about 16 cups.

Thawing in the Microwave

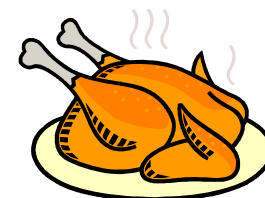
Microwave thawing is safe if the turkey is not too large for the oven and you plan on cooking the turkey right away. Check the manufacturer's instructions for the size turkey that will fit into your oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level for thawing. Place on a microwave safe plate to catch juices that may leak. Cook immediately after thawing. Be sure to clean and sanitize the microwave after thawing the turkey.

Roasting the Turkey

If you choose to stuff your turkey, stuff loosely. The stuffing should be moist, not dry, since heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment. Immediately after stuffing, place turkey in a preheated oven. Be aware that stuffed turkeys must cook longer than un-stuffed turkeys. Cooking the stuffing in a casserole dish along side the turkey is also an option. Use the following chart for the time to cook your turkey. The times are for fresh or thawed turkey in an oven at 325°F. The times are approximate and doneness should always be checked with a meat thermometer.

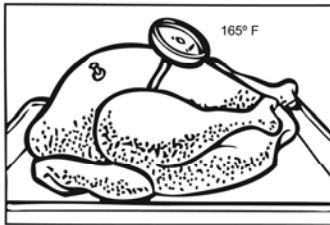
Pounds	Un-stuffed	Stuffed
8 - 12 pounds	2¾ to 3 hours	3 to 3½ hours
12 - 14 pounds	3 to 3¾ hours	3½ to 4 hours
14 - 18 pounds	3¾ to 4¼ hours	4 to 4¼ hours
18 - 20 pounds	4¼ to 4½ hours	4¼ to 4¾ hours
20 - 24 pounds	4½ to 5 hours	4¾ to 5¼ hours

Do not depend on a pop-up thermometer alone.



Roasting Instructions

1. Set oven temperature no lower than 325°F.
2. Place the turkey breast-side up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. To ensure a moist bird, add ½ cup of fresh water to the bottom of the roasting pan and cover the turkey with the roasting pan lid or a tent of heavy-duty aluminum foil for the first 1 to 1½ hours. To prevent overbrowning, foil may be placed over the turkey after it reaches the desired color.
3. If you choose to stuff your turkey, the ingredients can be prepared ahead of time; however, keep wet and dry ingredients separate. Chill all the wet ingredients (butter/margarine, cooked celery and onions, broth, etc.). Mix wet and dry ingredients just before filling the turkey cavity. Fill the cavity loosely. Cook the turkey immediately. Use a food thermometer to make sure the center of the stuffing reaches 165° F.



4. For safety and doneness, the internal temperature, as registered on a meat thermometer, must reach a minimum of 165°F in the thickest part of the thigh before removing from the oven. **DO NOT RELY ON A POP-UP THERMOMETER ALONE.** If you are cooking a turkey breast, the minimum temperature should reach 165°F.
5. Juices should be clear.
6. Let stand 20 minutes before carving.

Turkey Pita Sandwiches with Cranberry Chutney



- 1 cup chopped fresh cranberries
- ½ cup peeled, chopped Granny Smith apples
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 1 Tbsp chopped prunes
- 1 Tbsp chopped onion
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- 3 Tbsp reduced-calorie cranberry juice cocktail
- 2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 3 (6-inch) whole wheat pita bread rounds, cut in half
- 6 lettuce leaves
- 3 cups chopped cooked turkey breast

Combine chopped cranberries and next 8 ingredients in a non-aluminum saucepan; bring mixture to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer 30 minutes, stirring frequently. Uncover, and cook 5 minutes or until mixture is thickened, stirring frequently. Set aside. Line pita bread halves with lettuce leaves. Add ½ cup chopped turkey to each pita bread half. Top each serving with 2 tablespoons cranberry mixture.

Makes 6 servings.

Leftovers

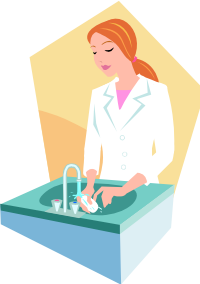
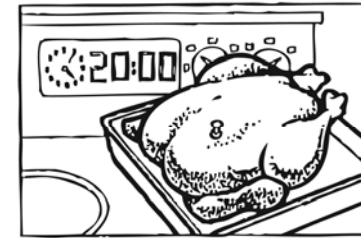
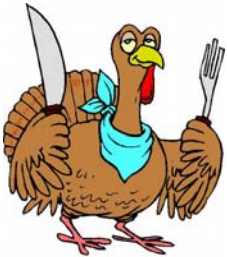
Turkey & Spinach Micro-Gratin

2 cups leftover stuffing
¼ cup leftover turkey gravy or regular strength chicken broth
2 cups firmly packed, rinsed and drained spinach leaves,
coarsely chopped
2 cups torn bite-size pieces cooked turkey
¼ pound shredded Swiss cheese
Paprika (optional)
Salt and Pepper

Mix stuffing and gravy together. Divide mixture evenly among four individual (about 1 cup) microwave safe dishes. Pat to make level. Layer in each dish ¼ of the spinach and ¼ of the turkey; then sprinkle equally with cheese. If assembled ahead, cover and chill until next day.


Place one or more uncovered dishes in a microwave oven. Heat at full power (100%) until cheese melts and mixture is hot in the center, about 1½ minutes for one dish. Remove dish from microwave oven; dust cheese lightly with paprika. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Makes 4 servings.



Wash hands, utensils, sink and anything else that has been in contact with the raw turkey or its juices with soap and warm water.

You can also sanitize utensils, sink, countertops, etc. with a chlorine bleach solution of 2 tablespoons per gallon of water.



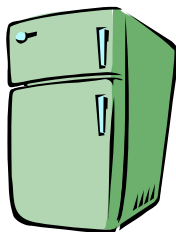
Safe Handling of Hot, Ready-Made Turkey Dinners

Pick up the food HOT ... and keep it HOT!

Just keeping foods warm is not enough. Harmful bacteria multiply fastest between 40°F and 140°F .

Put turkey in the oven and use a meat thermometer to make sure turkey remains at a constant temperature of at least 140°F in the oven. Stuffing and side dishes must also stay HOT. Covering with foil will help keep your food moist.

What if I am not going to eat right away?



Don't try to keep foods hot for longer than 2 hours. They will be safer and taste better if you:

1. Remove all stuffing from the turkey cavity, divide the turkey into smaller pieces and refrigerate everything in separate, shallow containers.
2. Reheat thoroughly to 165°F until hot and steaming.
3. Serve the meal within 2 days.

Reheating a whole cooked turkey is NOT recommended.

Question:

Is it safe to roast a turkey in a grocery store brown bag?

Answer:

DO NOT use brown paper bags for cooking. Glue and ink on brown bags are not intended as cooking materials and may give off harmful/toxic fumes. Also, brown bags are usually made from recycled materials and are not sanitary. To cook a turkey in a paper bag safely, use a commercial oven paper bag. The bags are time savers too, particularly if you are fixing a large bird.



Question:

My aunt has a holiday party every year. It lasts all afternoon and into the evening. She leaves food sitting out on the table for hours. I have small children and am concerned that they could get sick if they eat it. What should I do?

Answer:

You are right to be concerned about your children. They, as well as pregnant women, elderly people and persons with chronic illness stand a greater chance of getting sick from food poisoning and suffering complications. Everyone should avoid perishable foods which are not kept either cold or hot. Hopefully your aunt will have some hot foods kept hot (above 140°F) in a chafing dish, slow cooker, or warming trays. Cold foods are safe if kept cold (below 40°F) nestled in bowls of ice or replaced often from the refrigerator. You can offer your child these with confidence. Breads, cookies and cakes, are, of course, safe to eat. Encourage your aunt to refrigerate perishable food within 2 hours.



Question:

Is stuffing the turkey the night before a good time saver?

Answer:

No! It is dangerous to do so. Harmful bacteria can multiply in the stuffing. This can cause food-borne illness even when the stuffing is refrigerated. The stuffing is insulated inside the turkey and acts as an incubator for harmful bacteria.

Question:

Once turkey is safely cooked, does it matter how long you leave it out?

Answer:

Absolutely! The Centers for Disease Control report that the number of reported cases of food-borne illness increases with the holiday season. It is not a good idea to allow leftovers to sit out more than two hours. They will be safer if you separate them into smaller containers, refrigerate them as soon as possible, and reheat thoroughly to 165°F.

Question:

Does stuffing cooked inside the turkey taste better?

Answer:

Not necessarily. Stuffing cooked separately can be just as delicious. It is safer because when you stuff a turkey there is a risk that the internal temperature will not reach a safe temperature that kills bacteria (165°F).

Question:

Are turkeys injected with growth hormones?

Answer:

Turkeys grown in the United States for consumption are not given steroids or hormones during the growing process. There are no hormones that are approved for use in turkeys.

Bacterial Growth

Under ideal conditions, bacteria can double every 10-30 minutes. One cell can increase to over 16 million in 8 hours. For this reason, perishable food should never be held at room temperature for more than 2 hours. See the chart below for an example of how quickly bacteria grow.

Time	Bacterial Growth
0:00 minutes	1
0:20 minutes	2
0:40 minutes	4
1 hour	8
1 hour 20 minutes	16
1 hour 40 minutes	32
2 hours	64
3 hours	512
4 hours	4,096
5 hours	32,768
6 hours	262,144
7 hours	2,097,152
8 hours	16,777,216

Food Storage Guidelines

- Perishable foods, such as poultry, should not be out of the refrigerator more than 2 hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze leftovers promptly in shallow containers.
- It is safe to freeze leftover turkey and trimmings – even if you purchase them frozen. Wrap tightly for best quality.

Recommended Storage Times

These short but safe limits help keep refrigerated food from spoiling or becoming dangerous to eat. These time limits will keep frozen food at top quality.

Storage in the refrigerator 40°F or below	
Cooked Turkey	3 - 4 days
Broth and gravy	1 - 2 days
Other cooked dishes	3 - 4 days

Storage in the freezer 0°F or below	
Cooked Turkey	4 months
Broth and gravy	2 - 3 months
Other cooked dishes	4 - 6 months

Common Turkey Questions & Answers

Question:

Can turkey be partially cooked ahead of time and then finished later?

Answer:

No! Partial cooking of poultry meat is very unsafe. Cooking must be done in one continuous operation to assure the destruction of the bacteria that cause food-borne illness. It is safe, however, to partially cook turkey in a microwave or other oven immediately before transferring the turkey to a heated grill or to a preheated conventional oven for finishing.

Question:

Can I slow-cook the turkey at 200° F so it's ready to go in the morning?

Answer:

NO! It's not safe to cook a turkey (or any other meat, for that matter) in an oven set lower than 325°F. That's because it takes too long for the turkey to reach a temperature high enough to kill or limit growth of food-borne bacteria.

Question:

I cooked my turkey according to the directions, but when I sliced the breast meat, it was still pink near the bone. Is it safe?

Answer:

The color of cooked meat and poultry isn't always a sign of doneness. Only by using a meat thermometer can it be determined that the meat has reached a safe temperature. Turkey, fresh pork, ground beef or veal can remain pink even after cooking to the correct temperature.

