



Cooking Tips  
for a

# SAFE TURKEY

**A turkey can contain a variety of bacteria that could make you sick. It is important to prepare and cook it safely to prevent food poisoning.**

## 1. Buying and Storing

### Fresh Turkey

- Purchase a fresh turkey only 1 to 2 days prior to cooking.
- Refrigerate until you are ready to cook it. Place on a pan or tray to catch any juices that may leak.

### Frozen Turkey

- Keep frozen until you are ready to thaw.
- USDA recommends only purchasing frozen pre-stuffed turkeys labelled with its USDA or state mark of inspection.

## 2. Thawing

<b>In the Refrigerator (40 °F or below)</b>	
<i>Allow approximately 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds</i>	
4 to 12 pounds	1 to 3 days
12 to 16 pounds	3 to 4 days
16 to 20 pounds	4 to 5 days
20 to 24 pounds	5 to 6 days
<b>In Cold Water</b>	
<i>Allow approximately 30 minutes per pound</i>	
4 to 12 pounds	2 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

- When thawing in cold water, the turkey should be wrapped securely to prevent the water from leaking through.
- Place wrapped turkey in a sink full of cold water. Every 30 minutes, change the water. Cook the turkey immediately after thawing. Do not refreeze.

## Thawing in the Microwave Oven:

- Please reference your microwave user's manual for the size of turkey that will fit into the microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing.
- If you thaw the turkey in the microwave, cook it immediately after thawing.
- Remove packaging and the giblets.
- Ensure that the juices are caught on a microwave-safe dish.

## 3. Roasting

- The oven temperature should not be set lower than 325 °F.
- It is not recommended to stuff a turkey. It is safer to cook the stuffing outside the bird in a casserole dish.
- If you choose to stuff your turkey, the stuffing must reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.
- Check the internal temperature of the turkey in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. The internal temperature should reach 165 °F when measured with a food thermometer.
- If your turkey has a "pop-up" temperature indicator, it is recommended that you also check the temperature with a food thermometer.
- For the best quality, allow the turkey stand for 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to set. The turkey will be easier to carve.



**Remember! Always wash hands, utensils, the sink, and anything else that comes in contact with raw turkey and its juices with soap and water.**

### Timetables for Roasting Turkey

<b>Unstuffed</b>	
4 to 8 pounds (breast)	1½ to 3¼ hours
8 to 12 pounds	2¾ to 3 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 to 3¾ hours
14 to 18 pounds	3¾ to 4¼ hours
18 to 20 pounds	4¼ to 4½ hours
20 to 24 pounds	4½ to 5 hours
<b>Stuffed</b>	
4 to 6 pounds (breast)	Not usually applicable
6 to 8 pounds (breast)	2½ to 3½ hours
8 to 12 pounds	3 to 3½ hours
12 to 14 pounds	3½ to 4 hours
14 to 18 pounds	4 to 4¼ hours
18 to 20 pounds	4¼ to 4¾ hours
20 to 24 pounds	4¾ to 5¼ hours

### 4. Storing Leftovers

- The turkey, stuffing, and gravy should be discarded if left out at room temperature longer than two hours; one hour if the temperature is above 90 °F.
- Reduce the size of leftovers. Use shallow containers for storage and freeze if needed.
- Use refrigerated turkey, stuffing, and gravy within three to four days.
- If frozen, use leftovers within 2 to 6 months for best quality.

### 5. Reheating

Cooked turkey may be eaten cold or reheated.

#### Reheating in the Oven

- The oven should be set no lower than 325 °F.
- Add a little broth or water on top of the turkey to keep it moist. Cover.
- Reheat turkey until it reaches an internal temperature of 165 °F. Use a food thermometer to check the temperature.

#### Reheating in the Microwave Oven

- Rotate food to ensure even heating.
- Make sure the turkey reaches an internal temperature of 165 °F by checking with a food thermometer.
- Find the recommended times and power levels in the owner's manual for your microwave oven.

#### References:

1. USDA-FSIS. (2015, Sep 28). Let's Talk Turkey-A consumer Guide to Safely Roasting a Turkey. Retrieved from. <https://bit.ly/3gcGmlK>
2. CDC. (2021, Nov 18). Preparing Your Holiday Turkey Safely. Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3V6rR1s>