

# 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. For best quality, use within 1 year. Purchase only frozen pre-stuffed turkeys with the USDA or state marks of inspection.

### Fresh

Allow 1 pound per person. Buy 1 to 2 days before cooking. Do not buy fresh pre-stuffed turkeys.

## Thawing a Turkey

### Thawing time in the refrigerator (40 F)

Approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds (whole turkey)

- 5 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

### Thawing time in cold water

Approximately 30 minutes per pound (Whole turkey)

- 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

(Change water every 30 minutes)

*Wash hands and anything else that has come in contact with raw turkey and juices with hot, soapy water.*



### Thawing in the microwave

Check manufacturer's instructions for the size turkey that will fit into your oven, the minutes per pound and the power level to use for thawing. Remove all outside wrapping and place on a microwave-safe dish. Cook immediately after thawing.

## 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

- 4 to 8 pounds (breast) 1 ½ to 3 ¼ hours
- 8 to 12 pounds 2 ¾ to 3 hours
- 12 to 14 pounds 3 to 3 ¾ hours
- 14 to 18 pounds 4 to 4 ¼ hours
- 18 to 20 pounds 4 ¼ to 4 ½ hours
- 20 to 24 pounds 4 ¾ to 5 hours

#### Stuffed

- 4 to 6 pounds (breast) not usually applicable
- 6 to 8 pounds (breast) 2 ½ to 3 ½ hours
- 8 to 12 pounds 3 to 3 ½ hours
- 12 to 14 pounds 3 ½ hours to 4 hours
- 14 to 18 pounds 4 to 4 ¼ hours
- 18 to 20 pounds 4 ¼ to 4 ¾ hours
- 20 to 24 pounds 4 ¾ to 5 ¼ hours

## Roasting instructions

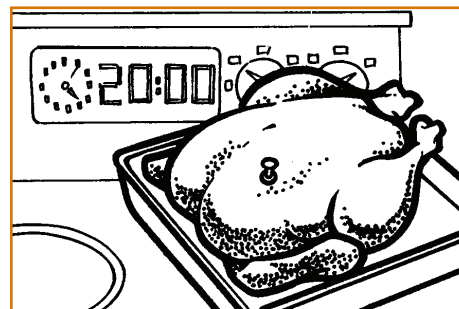
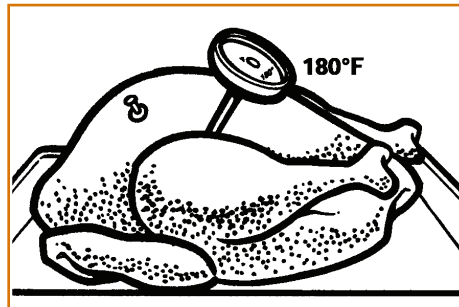
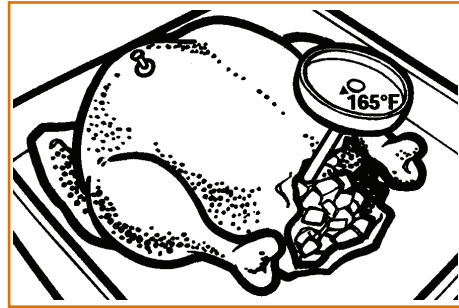
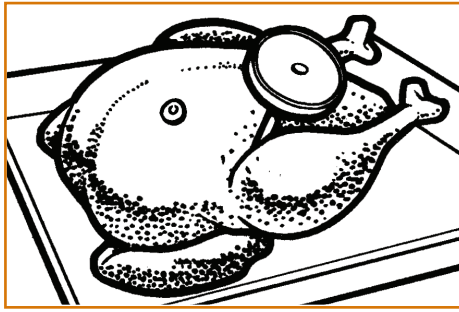
1. Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 F.

2. Place turkey breastside-up on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.

3. For optimum safety, it is recommended to cook stuffing outside the bird. If stuffed, stuff loosely and cook immediately.

4. For safety and doneness, the internal temperature, as registered on a meat thermometer, must reach a minimum of 165 F in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast before removing from the oven. The center of the stuffing should reach 165 F after stand time. For reasons of personal preferences, consumers may choose to cook turkey to higher temperatures.

5. Let the turkey 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 stuffing and gravy within 3 to 4 days. If freezing leftovers, use within 2 to 6 months for best quality.

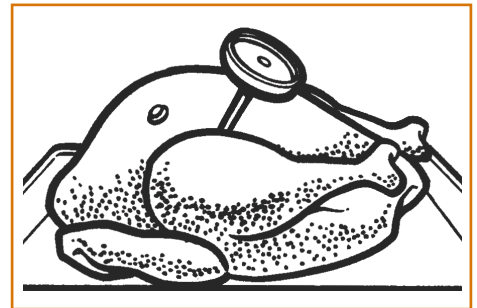
## Reheating Your Turkey

Cooked turkey may be eaten cold or reheated. Reheat turkey, stuffing and gravy thoroughly to an internal temperature of 165 F.

## Additional Roasting Hints

These are optional.

1. Tuck wing tips back under shoulders of bird, called “akimbo.”



2. A tent of aluminum foil may be placed over the turkey for the first 1 to 1½ hours of roasting time and then removed for browning.



3. Or a tent of foil may be placed over the turkey after it has reached a golden brown.

4. An ovenproof thermometer may be placed in the thigh of the turkey so you can check the internal temperature at intervals during roasting.

5. 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.

For more information about food safety, call your local Extension office or call USDA’s Meat and Poultry Hotline:

**1-888-674-6854**

**1-888-MPHotline**

10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern time

Monday through Friday

Or send an email to [mpholine.fsis@usda.gov](mailto:mpholine.fsis@usda.gov)

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