



# Food Safety Tips for Preparing a Holiday Turkey

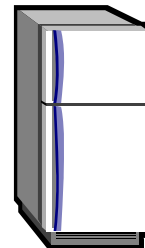
## Safe Thawing

The USDA recommends three ways to defrost turkeys: in the refrigerator, in cold water and in the microwave. **Never defrost a turkey on the counter!!!**

### Refrigerator Thawing

Plan ahead for slow thawing in the refrigerator. For every 5 pounds of turkey allow approximately 24 hours of thawing time in a refrigerator set at 40°F. After thawing, keep turkey refrigerated for only 1-2 days, or use the following chart to help you countdown to the holiday.

Size of Turkey	Thawing Time in the Refrigerator
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



### Cold Water Thawing

If you forget to thaw the turkey or don't have room in the refrigerator for thawing, don't panic. You can submerge the bird or cut-up parts in cold water in its airtight packaging or in a leak-proof bag. Allow about 30 minutes defrosting time per pound of turkey. Change the water every 30 minutes to be sure it stays cold. The following times are suggested for thawing a turkey in water. Turkeys thawed by the cold water method should be cooked immediately.

Size of Turkey	Hours to Defrost
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



### Microwave Thawing

Follow the oven manufacturer's instructions when thawing a turkey in the microwave. Check the instructions for the size turkey that will fit in your oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. Plan to cook immediately after thawing because some areas of the turkey may begin to cook during microwave thawing.

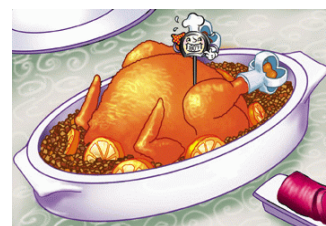


## **Safe Cooking**

- Set the oven temperature no lower than 325°F. Place turkey on a rack in a shallow roasting pan large enough to hold the turkey and a meat thermometer.
- For food safety, cook stuffing separately in a casserole dish. Use a food thermometer to check that the internal temperature of the stuffing has reached 165°F in the middle, thickest part.
- Check the temperature of the turkey in several locations, being sure to include the innermost part of the thigh and the thickest part of the breast. Even if the turkey has a “pop up” indicator, it is also recommended that a food thermometer be used.
- All turkey meat, including any that remains pink is safe to eat as soon as all parts reach at least 165°F. However, for reasons of personal preference regarding “doneness”, you might want to continue cooking to a slightly higher temperature such as 170-180°F. When turkey is removed from the oven, let stand 20 minutes.
- Many factors can affect the roasting time of a whole turkey:
  - A frozen or partially frozen turkey takes longer to cook than a completely thawed turkey.
  - A turkey will cook faster in a dark roasting pan.
  - The use of a foil tent for the entire cooking time can slow cooking.
  - Putting a lid on the roasting pan speeds up cooking.
  - An oven-cooking bag will shorten cooking time.

Judging cooking time for your turkey will be easier if the following chart is used. The times listed are for a fresh or thawed turkey in an oven at 325°F. These times are approximate; the only way to determine doneness is by using a thermometer.

Size of Turkey	Estimated Cooking Time
8 to 12 pounds	3 to 3 ½ hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 ½ 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



## **Storing Leftovers**

- Refrigerate turkey and stuffing separately within 2 hours of cooking.
- Use shallow containers and cut or slice the turkey into small pieces to fit.
- Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days and gravy within 1-2 days.
- Leftovers can also be frozen for up to 6 months.
- If reheating, food temperatures should reach at least 165°F.

