

HOW TO PREPARE & ROAST YOUR THANKSGIVING TURKEY

While a uniquely American holiday, the beauty of Thanksgiving is that it still gives us plenty of room to include our own ethnic traditions and tastes.

Thawing

- Defrost frozen birds in the refrigerator.
- The USDA suggests you allow about one day for every five pounds of turkey.
- You can defrost your bird more quickly by using a cold water bath.
- Submerge the bird in cold water in its airtight packaging.
- Allow 30 minutes per pound and change the water every 30 minutes to keep it cold.

Preparation for Cooking

- Remove the giblets and the neck from the cavity. Reserve them for stock or gravy.
- Wash the turkey inside and out with cold water and pat it dry with paper towels.
- Season the bird by rubbing the inside cavities with a handful of Kosher salt. Rub the skin with kosher salt and pepper. Optional seasoning: Carefully separate the skin from the breast with your fingers and rub your choice of seasonings mixed in oil or butter underneath the skin. Use fresh herbs, spices, citrus zest or slices of orange or lemon. To make a butter compound, mix your choice of seasonings (even maple syrup) into softened unsalted butter.
- Stuffing: Prepare stuffing follow your favorite recipe. Let it cool to room temperature before stuffing it into your bird. Do not fill the turkey with a hot mixture. Loosely fill both cavities. Close up both ends with skewers.
- Nonstuffed: Peel and quarter a large onion, wash and cut celery and carrots into large pieces. Loosely fill both cavities with the vegetables. Root vegetables such as turnips and celeriac are nice additions and can be prepared in the same manner.

Roasting

- Preheat oven to 425° F. Use the “bake” or “roasting” setting.
- Place the turkey breast-side up in a pan with two-inch-high sides. Pour ½ cup of liquid into the bottom of the pan (you can use any liquid, including water, chicken broth, white wine, apple cider, etc.).

- Insert a digital thermometer between the inner thigh and the breast. Be sure the probe rests in the meat and is not touching bone.
- Roast your bird on 425° F. for approximately 40 minutes, or until it is browned, to sear the bird and lock in the juices.
- Lower the oven temperature to 325° F. Cover the top of the turkey loosely with aluminum foil.
- Roasting times for stuffed turkeys are about 20 minutes per pound; unstuffed is about 16 minutes per pound.
- Roast until your thermometer registers 160° F.
- Remember, the bird will continue to cook after it is removed from the oven.

Approximate Roasting Times for Stuffed Turkey	
Turkey Weight	Hours
6 to 8 pounds	3 to 3-1/2 hours
8 to 12 pounds	3-1/2 to 4-1/2 hours
12 to 16 pounds	4-1/2 to 5-1/2 hours
16 to 20 pounds	5-1/2 to 6 hours
20 to 24 pounds	6 to 6-1/2 hours
24 to 28 pounds	6 -1/2 to 7 hours
28 to 32 pounds	7 to 7 1/2 hours
Approximate Roasting Times for Unstuffed Turkey	
Turkey Weight	Hours
6 to 8 pounds	2-1/2 to 3 hours
8 to 12 pounds	3 to 4 hours
12 to 16 pounds	4 to 5 hours
16 to 20 pounds	5 to 5-1/2 hours
20 to 24 pounds	5-1/2 to 6 hours
24 to 28 pounds	6 to 6-1/2 hours
28 to 32 pounds	6 -1/2 to 7 hours

- If you don't have a thermometer, you can tell that your turkey is done when its juices run clear, without any hint of pink. (You'll need to tip the bird until the juices run from the cavity.)
- Another test for doneness is to wiggle the leg. The turkey is done when its legs and thighs move easily back and forth.
- Transfer bird to your carving board.
- If you like gravy, this is the time to make it while the bird rests.
- Let the turkey sit for at least 20 minutes to redistribute the juices.
- Remove stuffing and carve.
- ENJOY!