

FN1443 (Revised November 2023)

FIGHT BAC!

KEEP FOOD SAFE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Let's Talk Turkey



Turkey anyone? Who can resist the smell of turkey roasting in the oven, growing ever more golden brown almost by the minute, its gravy-making juices crackling and sizzling in the bottom of the roaster pan.

Who can resist the taste of turkey – succulent – whether eaten hot with mashed potatoes, gravy and dressing or eaten cold, with mayonnaise and a thick slice of your favorite cheese nestled in a fresh bun or between two hearty pieces of hearth-baked bread.

Who could resist? Someone who's gotten a foodborne illness from eating turkey that's been improperly prepared, chilled or stored, that's who.

You can make sure that the turkey you serve during the holidays produces only compliments. Just remember the four simple steps to food safety: **clean, separate, cook, and chill**. Then follow these tips:

■ Clean

- Wash your hands with warm, soapy water before preparing food and after your hands have come in contact with raw turkey.
- Use clean utensils and work surfaces.
- Clean dishes and work surfaces after thawing or preparing raw poultry.
- Remove plastic wrapping and parts inside the cavity.

■ Separate

Don't cross-contaminate

- Don't thaw poultry – or any frozen food – at room temperature. You can thaw a frozen turkey in the refrigerator for up to four days. Place your thawing turkey on a tray in the refrigerator to prevent its juices from dripping on other foods. Or thaw it in cold water, and change the water at least every 30 minutes. Cook immediately after thawing in cold water.
- Check the "use-by" date on the package if you've purchased a fresh turkey.
- Use separate utensils and equipment for raw and cooked foods.

■ Cook

- It's safest to cook your dressing in a separate container and not inside the bird. In place of dressing in the bird, you can stuff the cavity with onions, apples or a combination of both. If you choose to stuff your turkey the traditional way, prepare your dressing and stuff your bird loosely right before you cook it. As a rule of thumb, you'll need about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dressing per pound of turkey.
- Cook breast up at an oven temperature of 325 F or hotter.
- Place foil over the breast to prevent overcooking, and remove it near the end of cooking to complete browning.
- Add a dab of butter or oil, if desired, to prevent the skin from drying and to provide a golden color. Season to your liking.
- When the skin begins to turn golden brown, the turkey is about two-thirds done.

Roasting guidelines

- Measure the temperature by inserting the meat thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh muscle. Make sure the thermometer is not touching the bone. Check the temperature about 30 minutes before "done" time, according to the roasting guidelines, and again before serving. The temperature of the thigh muscle should reach 165 F and the juices should run clear, not pink. The stuffing temperature should reach 165 F.

Weight	Unstuffed	Stuffed
(pounds)	(hours of cooking)	(hours of cooking)
8-12	2 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 3	3 to 3 $\frac{1}{2}$
12-14	3 to 3 $\frac{3}{4}$	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 4
14-18	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 4 $\frac{1}{4}$	4 to 4 $\frac{1}{4}$
18-20	4 $\frac{1}{4}$ to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	4 $\frac{1}{4}$ to 4 $\frac{3}{4}$
20-24	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 5	4 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 5 $\frac{1}{4}$

- Let turkey stand for about 15 minutes for easier carving. Serve hot and finish serving within 2 hours.



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■ Chill

- Remove stuffing and debone turkey before chilling. Store in shallow containers.
- Refrigerate immediately after meal and within 2 hours of cooking.
- Serve leftover turkey within four days. Serve leftover stuffing and gravy within two days, reheating to at least 165 F.
- For best quality, freeze plain cooked turkey at 0 F or below for up to four months.

Additional Questions?

For more information about nutrition and food safety, contact your local county office of NDSU Extension or visit the Extension website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/food.

Sources

- 1) Butterball Turkey at www.butterball.com
- 2) USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service at www.fsis.usda.gov
- 3) USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 800-535-4555.

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For more information on this and other topics, see www.ag.ndsu.edu

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