

# Turkey Cooking Tips

## To Stuff or Not to Stuff?

We recommend cooking the stuffing in a separate oven-proof dish. Stuffing a turkey makes overcooked meat more likely because it slows interior cooking. But if the holidays wouldn't be complete without a stuffed turkey, stuff it loosely - don't pack. And for safety's sake, do it just before cooking.

## Rapid Roasting:

This approach to fast, high-heat roasting was developed by the testers at Cook's Illustrated. The work upfront (brining and butterflying) pays off in quick, delicious results!

Brine the turkey all day. After brining, dry the turkey overnight in the refrigerator to assure crisp skin. Then butterfly the turkey. This takes a bit of work: Cut through the back, remove the backbone and flatten with a rolling pin, mallet, very sharp knife or possibly a cleaver.

Tie the legs together with kitchen twine, but let the wings hang naturally. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Lay the flattened, opened bird, skin side up, on a slotted roasting rack (the kind that comes with your stove). Place stuffing in a large, disposable aluminum roasting pan, if desired. Place the roasting rack over the pan. Roast until the internal temperature reaches 180°F in the thigh. The stuffing serves a dual purpose here. It also prevents smoke from burning fat dripping into the pan.

- Place the turkey, breast side down, on a rack over the drip pan. After 40 minutes, rotate the bird a half turn so the drumsticks are pointing in the opposite direction. In another 40 minutes, flip it over to breast side up. Then, 40 minutes later, rotate the bird a half turn. This will help keep the breast moist.
- With lid closed, cook the turkey at 350°F or 375°F.

## Playing it Safe

With all the time, effort and planning that goes into Thanksgiving dinner, let's make sure you keep your friends and family safe by following these simple guidelines.

- Refrigerate your fresh turkey at 40°F or below as soon as you get home. Place it in a large glass or plastic container to contain juices that may leak from the turkey. If you don't plan to cook the turkey within 72 hours, freeze it.
- If you purchase a frozen turkey, thaw it in the refrigerator... NEVER at room temperature. A whole turkey needs 24 hours thawing time for every 4 pounds. Allow three to five days, depending on the size of your turkey. The turkey is completely thawed when there are no ice crystals in the interior cavity. You can speed up the thawing process by placing the unopened turkey, in wrapper, breast side down, in cold water. Allow 30 minutes per pound of turkey and change the water every 30 minutes. Allow six to 10 hours total thawing time, depending on the size of your turkey.
- Avoid cross-contamination by thoroughly washing your hands before and after handling the turkey. Clean and sanitize the work surface and any utensils that come in contact with the raw turkey.
- Maintain a MINIMUM cooking temperature of 325°F. Cook until the thigh reaches 180°F to 185°F and stuffing in the center of the bird reaches 165°F.
- Cooking times found on the packaging are just estimated times. Ovens vary so the only safe way to make sure your turkey is cooked to a proper temperature is to use a meat thermometer or instant read thermometer.
- Remember the two-hour rule, making sure that food - turkey and all the trimmings - does not sit out more than two hours after coming out of the oven.
- Refrigerate leftovers as soon as possible. Remove any stuffing from the bird and remove meat from the bones before refrigerating.
- Use leftovers within two to three days. Thoroughly heat any leftovers to 165°F before serving.