



# Turkey Safety

**Plan Ahead** - Plan your menu several weeks before the holiday. Consider the following as you plan your meal:

A fresh turkey should only be purchased 1-2 days before cooking.

Determine how large a bird you need in relation to the number of people you'll be serving:

- Whole bird . . . . . 1 lb per person
- Boneless turkey breast. . . . ½ lb per person
- Turkey breast. . . . . ¾ lb per person

**Thawing** - While frozen, a turkey is safe and can be stored up to 12 months. Once it begins to defrost, bacteria present prior to freezing begin to multiply. Safe alternatives for defrosting a turkey are:

- ✓ In the refrigerator
- ✓ In the microwave
- ✓ In cold, running water

In the refrigerator (40°F), place frozen bird in original wrapper and thaw as follows:

Size of Turkey	Thawing Time in the Refrigerator
4 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 40 pounds	5 to 6 days

Microwave thawing is safe if the turkey is not too large. Check the 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. Cook immediately after thawing.

**Source:** Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA.

In cold water you can submerge the turkey and change the water every 30 minutes.

Size of Turkey	Hours to Defrost
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

**Preparation** - The following cooking time chart is for fresh or thawed turkey in an oven at 325°F.

UNSTUFFED	
Size of Turkey	Hours to Cook (approximate)
8 to 12 pounds	2 ¼ to 3 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 to 3 ¼ hours
14 to 18 pounds	3 ¾ to 4 ¼ hours
18 to 20 pounds	4 ¼ to 4 ½ hours
20 to 24 pounds	4 ½ to 5 hours
STUFFED	
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

Use a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey. Make sure that the temperature of the bird in the thigh is 165°F. The stuffing should reach 165°F, whether cooked inside the bird or in a separate dish.