

Foolproof Roast Turkey

Fact Sheet 682

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Roasting a turkey does not have to be the dreaded chore of the holiday season—or any season for that matter. Following a few simple steps will assure you of an excellent meal and many well-deserved compliments.

1. Select a plump turkey that is wide from the front to the rear of the breast. Allow approximately 1 pound of uncooked turkey per person to minimize leftovers.

2. It is advisable to cook a turkey from the frozen state: this will prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. However, if you want to thaw an unstuffed turkey to save cooking time, there are several ways to do it, depending on how much time you have. If you are not in a hurry, place the turkey in the refrigerator and it will thaw in about 3 or 4 days. If you are working against the clock, thaw the turkey under cold running water. Never thaw a commercially stuffed frozen turkey.

3. Place the turkey breast-up in a shallow roasting pan. Insert a good-quality meat thermometer at the inside of the thigh, making sure that it does not touch the bone.

4. Ideally, you should prepare and cook stuffing in a pan separate from the one containing the turkey. Be sure to wash your hands after handling the uncooked bird and before making the stuffing.

If you decide to cook your stuffing in the turkey, remember that stuffing expands during roasting. Stuff the turkey body and the neck cavity loosely with approximately three-quarters cup of stuffing per pound of oven-ready weight.

5. Cook your turkey at 325 °F, and allow approximately 25 minutes of cooking time per pound for a thawed bird—35 minutes per pound if the turkey is

frozen. Place a loose tent of aluminum foil over the turkey and pan. Remove the foil during the last half hour of roasting and the turkey will become golden brown. Unstuffed turkeys require about a half hour less roasting time than those that are stuffed.

6. Roast the turkey until the meat thermometer registers 185 °F in the thigh, 190 °F in the breast, and 165 °F in the stuffing.

7. After roasting, let the turkey stand 15 to 30 minutes before slicing. Always use a meat fork to hold the turkey. Be sure not to touch the bird with your hands, which may have harmful bacteria on them.

8. Remove all stuffing from the turkey.

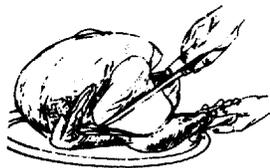
9. Refrigerate the leftover turkey and stuffing immediately. Follow the golden rule of food safety: Keep and serve hot food at or above 140 °F and cold food at or below 40 °F.

10. For even easier preparation, you may want to buy a self-basting turkey. The meat is juicier, stays fresher when refrigerated, and takes about 5 minutes less per pound to roast. Most self-basting turkeys also have pop-up temperature indicators. Cooks can spend more time socializing with guests and less time hovering over a hot oven, basting the turkey, and wondering when it will be done. A thermometer, however, is often preferred over pop-up indicators for more precise temperature control. The self-basting feature does add additional cost to the purchase price of your turkey.

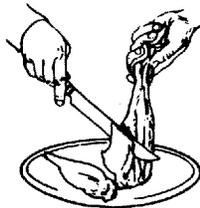
11. For easy carving instructions, see the reverse side of this sheet.

Follow these instructions for roasting a turkey to its succulent best!

Traditional Carving Method



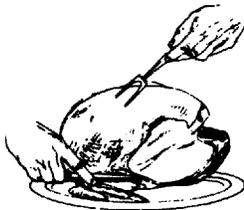
1. Remove drumstick and thigh. To remove the drumstick and thigh, press the leg away from the body. The joint connecting the leg to the backbone will snap free or may be severed easily with a knife point. Cut the dark meat completely from the body by following the body contour carefully with a knife.



2. Slicing dark meat. Place the drumstick and thigh on a plate and cut through the connecting joint. Both pieces may be individually sliced. Tilt the drumstick to a convenient angle, slicing towards the plate as shown in the illustration.



3. Slicing thigh. To slice thigh meat, hold the piece firmly on a plate with fork. Cut even slices parallel to the bone.

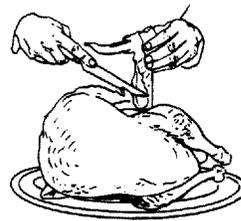


4. Preparing breast. For easy slicing, place the knife parallel and as close to the wing as possible. Make a deep cut into the breast, cutting right to the bone. This is the base cut. All breast slices will stop at this vertical cut.

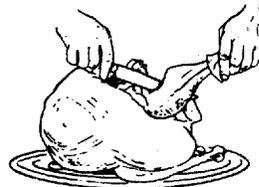


5. Carving breasts. After you have made the base cut, begin to slice the breast. Carve downward, ending at the base cut. Start each new slice slightly higher up on the breast. Keep slices thin and even.

New Side-Carving Method



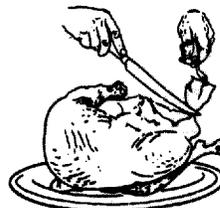
1. Carving position. Place the turkey on its side, breast away from the carver. Remove the wing tip and first joint. Hold the tip firmly, lift up, and sever at the joint. Set this aside for other dishes and leave the second joint of the wing attached to the turkey.



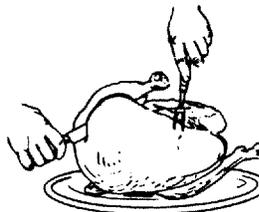
2. Remove drumstick. Slice dark meat off the drumstick and thigh until the thigh bone is exposed. Lift the drumstick and cut off at the thigh joint. Slice meat from the drumstick.



3. Cut away thigh bone. Steady the turkey with a fork. Run a knife point completely around the thigh bone, loosening it. Pry one end up, grasp it, and pull it free. With the thigh bone gone, generous portions of dark meat can be sliced from the turkey.



4. Slicing dark meat. Slice dark meat away from the turkey just above the removed thigh bone. As you work deeper into the meat, you will discover the "oyster." This choice piece may be lifted whole from the spoon-shaped section of the backbone.



5. Slicing white meat. Breast meat, like dark meat, is much easier to carve if the turkey stands 20 to 30 minutes after roasting. Make a deep vertical cut in the breast, just in front of the wing joint, to serve as a base for all breast meat slices.



6. Breast slices. Start from the center of the breast and cut toward you, making large, even slices. When more slices are needed, turn the turkey and repeat the process. Remove stuffing from a hole cut under the thigh.