

THE THANKSGIVING PRIMER

The Palm Beach Post

TALKING TURKEY SIZE: If you're planning on a big bird, you must have a big refrigerator freezer. Turkeys must stay frozen and be thawed in cool temperatures to prevent food poisoning. If you're buying a whole bird, figure 1 pound per person. Remember that only 50 percent of a whole turkey is edible. If buying a breast or other parts, plan ½ to ¾ pound of meat per person. So, if you have twelve guests, you'd need 6 to 9 pounds of meat, which you would find on a 12- to 18-pound turkey. (If you want leftovers, go for the 18-pounder.)

STORING AND THAWING THE BIRD: Store the turkey in the freezer, and allow 5 hours per pound to thaw in the refrigerator, or ½ hour per pound in cold water. So an 18-pound bird would take 90 hours to thaw in the refrigerator; 9 hours in cold water. If using cold water, change it every half hour.

FOOD SAFETY NOTE: Never thaw the turkey on the counter, and do not stuff in advance, because bacteria may grow. (The U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests you not stuff at all.)

PREPARING THE BIRD: In a clean sink, unwrap the thawed turkey and wash skin well. Unhook the legs from the leg clamp and remove the bags of giblets and neck from the cavity. (There often are two bags.) Set these aside for making gravy. Wash the cavity, and cut off the fatty knob of skin at the rear of the bird. Season the inside and skin of the bird with salt and pepper; set on a tray. Wrap in plastic and refrigerate.

ROASTING THE TURKEY: For open-pan roasting, preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Put the bird in a roasting pan large enough to hold the drippings. Sturdy, disposable aluminum pans are fine for this. If you decide to stuff the bird, stuff it from the back cavity first, then from the front. Important: The stuffing should be packed loosely so that it will cook through. Sew up the front of the bird; put the legs back in the leg-lock to hold the rear cavity closed. Sew the rear cavity if it gapes. Spread butter or oil and your choice of seasonings over the skin of the turkey. Use a loose tent of aluminum foil (shiny side down) over the bird during the first two hours of roasting to keep it from overbrowning. Baste the turkey with pan drippings, or use flavored liquids such as fruit juice, honey-mustard or bourbon. The turkey will continue to cook once it's removed from the oven, so take care not to overcook. After two hours in the oven, check it with a meat thermometer. Cook it to 165 degrees on a thermometer stuck in the thickest part of the thigh meat – don't let the thermometer touch a bone. Juices should run clear. If you've stuffed it, check the stuffing also with the thermometer – it should read 165 degrees. (See the chart for roasting times.) Let the turkey sit, covered with foil, 30 minutes after its' cooked for perfect slicing.

APPROXIMATE ROASTING TIMES

Weight in pounds	Unstuffed	Stuffed
4-6*	1-1/2 to 2-1/4 hours	N/A
8-12	2-3/4 to 3 hours	3 to 3-1/2 hours
12-14	3 to 3-3/4 hours	3-1/2 to 4 hours
14-18	3-3/4 to 4-1/4 hours	4 to 4-1/4 hours
18-20	4 to 4-1/2 hours	4-1/4 to 4-3/4 hours
20-24	4-1/2 to 5 hours	4-3/4 to 5-1/4 hours

*(breast or parts only)

Note: If you have brined the turkey, cut the roasting time by 1/3. Use a meat thermometer to check for final doneness.

HOW BIG?

- # For eight people, buy a 12-pound turkey
- # For ten people, buy a 15-pound turkey
- # For twelve people, buy a 18-pound turkey
- # For fourteen people, buy a 20-pound turkey
- # If your goal is to have leftovers, aim for 1-1/2 pounds per person whatever the turkey's size.

HOW MUCH TO ALLOW PER PERSON

These are approximate amounts. For young children, cut the amounts in half.

Turkey: ½ to ¾ pound of meat

Stuffing: ½ cup to ¾ cup (4 to 6 ounces)

Gravy: 1/3 cup (approximately 2-1/2 ounces)

Cranberry Sauce: ¼ to ½ cup (2 to 4 ounces)

Rolls: 2

Potatoes: ½ to ¾ cup

Vegetables: ½ to ¾ cup

Pie: 1-1/2 pieces

Coffee: 1-1/2 cups

HOT LINES FOR HELP

Butterball Turkey Hotline – 800-288-8372

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety Hotline – 800-535-4555

ONLINE SITES

Butterball.com – Butterball turkey site; dinner menus, recipes, troubleshooting

Landolakes.com – Land-O-Lakes company site; recipes, troubleshooting baked goods

Foodandwine.com

Epicurious.com

Food52.c