

## ***A Worry-Free Thanksgiving Turkey***

By

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Thanksgiving. . .it's that time of year again when we gather around the table with family and friends. Here are some frequently asked questions consumers raise concerning turkey.

**Q: I'm having a group of 10 people over for dinner on Thanksgiving. What size turkey should I buy? How much time should I allow for roasting?**

A: The rule of thumb when buying a turkey for a crowd is to allow one pound per person. But, if you wish to have leftovers, you'll want a larger bird. Consider, then, a 15-pound turkey. You'll keep your crowd happy and full, and you'll have enough left for those all-too-important turkey sandwiches the next day. Allow a roasting time of 10 to 12 minutes per pound if the bird is unstuffed. Food safety guidelines recommend roasting the stuffing separate from the bird.

**Q: Should I buy a fresh or frozen turkey?**

A: This depends on personal preference. Some people like the convenience of buying a frozen turkey—if they have sufficient freezer space, they can buy it in advance. If you buy a frozen turkey, make sure your freezer is set to 0 degrees F to keep it rock solid. On the other hand, if you buy a fresh turkey, do so no more than two days in advance. To store it, make sure your refrigerator is set at 40 degrees F or cooler, and pack the refrigerator loosely so that cool air can circulate. Put the turkey on a plate, in case its juices drip (of course, if you're using this plate for the cooked turkey as well, wash it first with soap and hot water).

**Q: How should I safely thaw a frozen turkey?**

A: Defrost a turkey in the refrigerator, **not** on the counter. A small turkey may take two to three days, while a large turkey may take up to four or five days. If you need it to thaw more quickly, you may immerse the turkey in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes, or you may use a microwave, following the manufacturer's instructions. Always cook defrosted poultry immediately.

**Q: What's the best way to carve a turkey?**

A: First, let the turkey sit after it comes out of the oven, so you'll be able to cut it neatly. A 20-minute rest is sufficient for a 15-pound turkey. For larger birds, allow at least two minutes longer for each pound. The best way to begin carving the bird is to lift the skin at the

neck, breast-up, and use a small knife to scrape away the meat around the wishbone. Pull the wishbone to remove it. Now, you can carve the breast in neat slices, either vertical or horizontal, depending on whether you want them large or small. Next, use a knife to remove the legs—you can keep the bird in place with a large fork. Transfer each whole leg (which may include a small part of the back) to a carving board and cut apart the thigh and the drumstick at the joint. You can cut the meat off the thigh and the drumsticks if desired. Next, the wings: pry the joint away with a fork, then cut through the joint once it shows.

**Q: How long can my roasted turkey sit out after I serve it?**

A: Your turkey should not sit out for longer than **two hours total**—so let it rest, carve it, serve it, and then get it into the refrigerator after the main course. Cooked turkey parts may be stored in the refrigerator for three to four days. However, if they are sitting in broth or gravy, they should be stored only one to two days.

I hope these suggestions will help you have a delicious turkey! I wish you and your family a truly blessed thanksgiving—with moist, flavorful turkey, delicious side dishes, and a bright circle of people surrounding you, brimming with hope and strength!