

Countdown to the Thanksgiving Holiday Meal

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As Thanksgiving approaches, cooking the traditional turkey dinner can give rise to anxieties and questions. What size of turkey should I buy? Should I buy a frozen turkey or a fresh one? How do I cook my turkey? Read on for some tried-and-true tips for preparing your holiday bird.



Fresh or Frozen

If you choose to buy a frozen bird, you may do so at any time. But make sure you have adequate storage space in your freezer. If you buy a fresh turkey, be sure you purchase it only 1-2 days before cooking. **Do not buy a pre-stuffed fresh turkey.**

What Size Turkey to Purchase:

Type of Turkey	Pounds to Buy
Whole bird	1 pound per person
Boneless breast of turkey	1/2 pound per person
Breast of turkey	3/4 pound per person
Pre-stuffed frozen turkey	1 1/4 pounds per person ó keep frozen until ready to cook

Thawing

- In the refrigerator**

Place the frozen bird in its original wrapper in the refrigerator (40 °F or below). Allow approximately 24 hours per 4 to 5 pounds of turkey. A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1-2 days.

Thawing Time

Size of Turkey	In Refrigerator	In Cold Water
4 to 12 pounds	1 to 3 days	2 - 6 hours
12 to 16 pounds	3 to 4 days	6 - 8 hours
16 to 20 pounds	4 to 5 days	8 - 10 hours
20 to 24 pounds	5 to 6 days	10 - 12 hours

- In cold water**

Allow 30 minutes per pound. Wrap your turkey securely, making sure the water is not able to leak through the wrapping. Submerge your wrapped turkey in cold tap

water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed. Do not refreeze.

- **In the microwave**

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.

Preparation

If you choose to stuff your turkey, stuff loosely. The stuffing should be moist, not dry, since heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment. Place a stuffed turkey in the oven immediately. You may also cook the stuffing outside the bird in a casserole. Judging cooking time for your turkey will be easier if you following the chart on the plastic wrapper.

Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey.

A whole turkey is safe cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F throughout the bird. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. All turkey meat, including any that remains pink, is safe to eat as soon as all parts reach at least 165 °F. The stuffing should reach 165 °F, whether cooked inside the bird or in a separate dish. When the turkey is removed from the oven, let it stand 20 minutes. Remove stuffing and carve turkey.

Storing Leftovers

Cut the turkey into small pieces; refrigerate stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking. Use leftover turkey and stuffing within 3-4 days or freeze these foods. Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165 °F or until hot and steaming.

Got More Questions?

For answers to your questions about meat, poultry, or egg products, you may also call the **USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline toll free at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)**. The hotline is open year-round Monday through Friday from 10:00 AM to 4 PM (English or Spanish). Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day. Check out the FSIS Web site at www.fsis.usda.gov. Send e-mail questions to PHotline.fsis@usda.gov.

For more information, contact the Wildcat Extension District, Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district.

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Cranberry Turkey Salad

This is a tasty way to use leftover turkey and get in lots of healthy fruits and veggies.

Ingredients:

2 cups chilled cooked turkey without bones, cut into small pieces

1 large red apple, cored and cut into small pieces

1 small can mandarin oranges, drained

1/4 cup dried cranberries

3 tablespoons walnuts, coarsely chopped

4 cups fresh lettuce, torn into small pieces

1 cup jellied whole-berry cranberry sauce

1/4 cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed



Directions:

1. In a medium bowl, combine turkey, apple pieces, oranges, cranberries and walnuts.
2. Place lettuce on four dinner plates.
3. In a separate bowl, mix cranberry sauce and orange juice concentrate.
4. Pour juice mixture over turkey mixture and stir gently.
5. Serve salad on lettuce.
6. If desired, serve with whole wheat dinner rolls and low-fat milk.
7. Refrigerate any leftovers within 2 hours.

Each serving of salad provides 398 calories, 31 g protein, 5 g fat and 59 g carbohydrate.