Let's Talk Turkey—

Fresh or Frozen?

Fresh Turkeys

- Allow 1 pound of turkey per person.
- Buy your turkey only 1 to 2 days before you plan to cook it.
- Keep it stored in the refrigerator until you're ready to cook it. Place it on a tray or in a pan to catch any juices that may leak.
- Do not buy fresh pre-stuffed turkeys. If not handled properly, any harmful bacteria that may be in the stuffing can multiply very quickly.

Frozen Turkeys

- Allow 1 pound of turkey per person.
- Keep frozen until you're ready to thaw it.
- Turkeys can be kept frozen in the freezer indefinitely; however, cook within 1 year for best quality.
- See "Thawing Your Turkey" for thawing instructions.

Frozen Pre-Stuffed Turkeys

USDA recommends only buying frozen pre-stuffed turkeys that display the USDA or State mark of inspection on the packaging. These turkeys are safe because they have been processed under controlled conditions.

DO NOT THAW before cooking. Cook from the frozen state. Follow package directions for proper handling and cooking.

Allow 1¼ pounds of turkey per person.

Thawing Your Turkey

There are three ways to thaw your turkey safely — in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in the microwave oven.

In the Refrigerator (40 °F or below)
Allow approximately 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Days</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 to 12 pounds</td>
<td>1 to 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 to 16 pounds</td>
<td>3 to 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 to 20 pounds</td>
<td>4 to 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 to 24 pounds</td>
<td>5 to 6</td>
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Keep the turkey in its original wrapper. Place it on a tray or in a pan to catch any juices that may leak. A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days. If necessary, a turkey that has been properly thawed in the refrigerator may be refrozen.

In Cold Water
Allow approximately 30 minutes per pound

<table>
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<th>Weight</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 to 12 pounds</td>
<td>2 to 6</td>
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<td>12 to 16 pounds</td>
<td>6 to 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 to 20 pounds</td>
<td>8 to 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 pounds</td>
<td>10 to 12</td>
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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 Oven

- Check your owner’s manual for the size turkey that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and power level to use for thawing.
- Remove all outside wrapping.
- Place on a microwave-safe dish to catch any juices that may leak.
- Cook your turkey immediately. Do not refreeze or refrigerate your turkey after thawing in the microwave oven.

REMINDER: Remove the giblets from the turkey cavities after thawing. Cook separately.

Storing Your Leftovers

- Discard any turkey, stuffing, and gravy left out at room temperature longer than 2 hours; 1 hour in temperatures above 90 °F.
- Divide leftovers into smaller portions. Refrigerate or freeze in covered shallow containers for quicker cooling.
- Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within 3 to 4 days. Use gravy within 1 to 2 days.
- If freezing leftovers, use within 2 to 6 months for best quality.

Reheating Your Turkey

Cooked turkey may be eaten cold or reheated.

In the Oven

- Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 °F.
- Reheat turkey to an internal temperature of 165 °F. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature.
- To keep the turkey moist, add a little broth or water and cover.

In the Microwave Oven

- Cover your food and rotate it for even heating. Allow standing time.
- Check the internal temperature of your food with a food thermometer to make sure it reaches 165 °F.

Consult your microwave oven owner's manual for recommended times and power levels.

Deep Frying: **Thaw** and **completely dry** your turkey before putting into your hot oil.

For more information about food safety (in English and Spanish), call:

**USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline**
1-888-MPHotline
(1-888-674-6854)
TTY: 1-800-256-7072
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday
E-mail: mrophotline.fsis@usda.gov

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