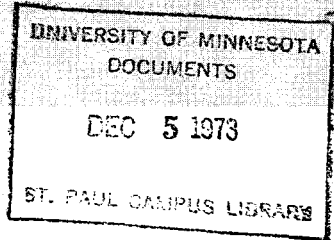


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# The Roaster Turkey

## CONSUMER INFORMATION HOME ECONOMICS NO. 9 — REVISED 1973 MURIEL S. BRINK

Most of the turkeys on today's market are sold completely cleaned and frozen.

When you purchase a turkey, read the label for information on class, inspection, grade, and weight. The label also may give instructions for storing, thawing, and cooking the turkey.

### CLASSES OF WHOLE TURKEYS ON THE MARKET

1. A fryer-roaster turkey is a young, immature bird, usually under 16 weeks of age, of either sex. The bird is tender-meated with soft, pliable, smooth-textured skin and flexible breastbone cartilage.
2. A young hen turkey is a young female turkey, usually 5-7 months of age, that is tender-meated with soft, pliable, smooth-textured skin. The breastbone cartilage is flexible, but somewhat less so than that of the fryer-roaster.
3. A young tom turkey is a young male turkey with the same characteristics as the young hen turkey. (Some processors label classes 2 and 3 as "young turkey" with no reference to sex.)
4. Frozen stuffed turkeys are available and labeled as such. Do not defrost stuffed turkeys before you cook them. Follow the storing and cooking instructions on the label.

Buy turkeys with sound wrappings and no discoloration or freezer burn.

### INSPECTION LABEL

Most turkeys are processed under USDA supervision and are individually inspected for wholesomeness. Such an inspection also is a prerequisite for grading for quality. Look for the inspection mark (a circle) and the grade mark (a shield).

### GRADE LABEL

Most turkeys available on Minnesota markets are U.S. grade A. They are well fleshed with a full breast and meaty legs. There are no defects such as skin tears, pinfeathers, crooked breasts, bruises, or broken bones, and no parts are missing. They have a good layer of well distributed fat beneath the skin.

B and C grade turkeys may not be as well fleshed as grade A birds, and they may have some minor defects. They rarely are labeled by grade and appear under various brand names.

You can purchase turkeys with parts missing or serious tears at very reasonable prices at some markets.

### QUANTITY TO PURCHASE

For unstuffed birds weighing 12 pounds or more, allow 1/2 or 3/4 pound of ready-to-cook weight per person. For turkeys under 12 pounds, allow 3/4 to 1 pound per person. The actual number of servings you'll get will depend on your cooking and carving skill and the size of servings.

Suggested amounts:

Ready-to-cook turkey (pounds)	Number of persons
6-8	6-10
8-12	10-20
12-16	20-32
16-20	32-40
20-24	40-50

### STORING

**Frozen** — Keep at 0° F. or lower.

**Thawed** — If possible, cook turkey immediately after it has thawed. If necessary, the thawed bird may be held at 38° F. or less for up to 2 days.

**Cooked** — Separate the turkey and dressing, cover them tightly, and refrigerate them immediately after the meal. Use them within 2 days. For extended storage, wrap the meat and dressing separately in good quality packaging material and store them at 0° F. for up to 1 month. Turkey slices or chunks covered with gravy or broth may be held up to 6 months. Never freeze a whole, cooked stuffed turkey or a home-prepared, uncooked stuffed turkey.

### THAWING

Keep turkey frozen until it is time to thaw or cook it. Turkey can be thawed in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in a paper bag at cool room temperatures. Thawing times for any of these methods will be shorter for whole birds if giblets are not packed in the body cavity.

#### Thawing in the Refrigerator

Place the frozen turkey on a tray and thaw it until it is pliable. Cover the bird loosely with wax paper if it is unwrapped.

Here is a timetable for thawing turkey in the refrigerator:

Size of turkey	Approximate thawing time
4-12 pounds	1-2 days
12-20 pounds	2-3 days
20-24 pounds	3-4 days
Large pieces (half, quarter, half breast)	1-2 days
Cut-up pieces	3-9 hours

#### Thawing in Cold Water

Place the frozen turkey in a watertight wrapping and immerse it in cold water. Change the water frequently to speed thawing. Thaw turkey until it is pliable. Here is a timetable for thawing:

Size of turkey	Approximate thawing time
4-12 pounds	4-6 hours
12-20 pounds	6-8 hours
20-24 pounds	8-12 hours

#### Thawing In a Paper Bag

Leave the turkey in the original wrap. Place frozen turkey in a double-wall paper bag or wrap in several thicknesses of paper. Close the bag with paper clips or staple it shut. Place turkey on a tray for easy handling and to catch drippings. Thaw at 70° F. or below until product is pliable.

The table below gives approximate thawing times:

Size of turkey	Approximate thawing time
4-12 pounds	12-15 hours
12-24 pounds	15-20 hours

Check the turkey at intervals during the last hours of thawing.

After turkey is thawed, prepare it for cooking the same way you would prepare chilled unfrozen poultry. Cook turkey promptly after thawing. In an emergency, you can hold a thawed bird in the refrigerator for not longer than 2 days.

**STUFFING**

Stuff the turkey just before you put it in the oven. Under no circumstances should you stuff a turkey the day before you cook it. You may prepare the stuffing ahead of time, but do not combine the ingredients until just before you put the bird into the oven. Never partially cook a stuffed turkey. To shorten cooking time, you may roast a turkey unstuffed and bake the stuffing separately.

**OVEN ROASTING**

Plan the roasting time so the turkey will be done 20 to 30 minutes before you serve it. The rest period allows for reabsorption of juices and makes carving easier.

If desired, stuff the bird lightly with dressing. Insert the legs into the band of skin if intact. Or tie the legs together and down to the tail for

even roasting. Tuck the wings back or tie them flat close to the body. Roast at 325° F.

Place the turkey on a rack in a shallow pan, breast side up. Brush the bird with melted shortening. Insert a roast meat thermometer so that the tip is in the center of the inside thigh muscle or the thickest part of the breast meat. Be sure the tip does not touch bone.

You may wish to cover the breast and sides with a loose tent of aluminum foil or with a cloth dipped in melted shortening. Remove the foil tent or cloth about 20 minutes before the bird is done to insure even browning.

It is not necessary to sear, add salt or water, or cover the turkey. Complete the roasting in one continuous cooking period.

When the turkey is two-thirds done, cut the trussing strings or the bridge of skin that holds the legs down. Roast the turkey until the drumstick can be moved up and down or can be twisted readily out of the joint. Meat on the thickest part of the drumstick should yield to pressure. The thermometer should register 185° F. The center of the stuffing should register 165° F.

You may wrap the giblets and neck in aluminum foil and roast them on the rack beside the turkey. Or, simmer them in water until they are tender, cut them up, and use them in making giblet gravy.

**Guide to roasting turkey at 325° F.**

Kind of turkey	Ready-to-cook weight (pounds)	Approximate total roasting* time (hours)	Internal temperature of poultry when done
Whole	6 to 8	2½ to 3	185° F. in thigh
	8 to 12	3 to 3½	185° F. in thigh
	12 to 16	3½ to 4¼	185° F. in thigh
	16 to 20	4¼ to 5	185° F. in thigh
	20 to 24	5 to 6	185° F. in thigh
Halves, quarters, and pieces	5 to 8	2½ to 3	-----
	8 to 10	3 to 3½	-----
	10 to 12	3½ to 4	-----
Frozen stuffed turkey		Follow directions on the label.	

\*A longer roasting time is required if bird is slightly frozen.