



Tips for safe, delicious turkey

For many of us, Thanksgiving dinner is the largest meal we prepare all year. So much time and effort goes into planning. There's the decorations, the place settings, the side dishes, the guest list, and oh yeah, the turkey! Follow these tips to ensure a safe and delicious turkey at your Thanksgiving dinner.

- If you're planning to cook a fresh turkey, buy it no more than two days before Thanksgiving.
- You can buy a frozen turkey several weeks before. Just make sure you allow enough time for thawing. You should never thaw at room temperature on the counter. Thaw the turkey in the refrigerator, in the sink using cold water that you change every 30 minutes, or in the microwave if followed by immediate cooking.
- Before you start, wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- Don't wash the turkey. This can spread bacteria onto kitchen surfaces. Washing the meat will not remove the bacteria. The only way to remove the bacteria is to properly cook the turkey.
- Keep the turkey away from all other foods before cooking in order to avoid cross-contamination. Don't prepare any other foods until you put the turkey in the oven and properly clean and sanitize the area.
- If possible, use a different cutting board and knife when preparing the turkey. Wash and sanitize everything that touched the raw meat, even countertops.
- Cook the turkey until it reaches 165 degrees F, measured with a metal-stem thermometer. Check the temperature in three places: the thickest part of the breast, the innermost part of the wing, and the innermost part of the thigh.
- It is always safer to cook the stuffing separately. However, if you choose to stuff your bird, use a metal-stem thermometer to check the temperature of the stuffing too. The center of the stuffing should reach at least 165 degrees F.
- Do not store stuffing inside the turkey. Remove it, and refrigerate it in a separate container.

Reference: USDA <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/events/thanksgiving/index.html>

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