The Turkey Guide

Times below follow USDA guidance for a turkey roasted at 325°F. They are approximate, so plan with them and always use a food thermometer.

How big a bird

GUESTS	TURKEY SIZE
4 to 6	6 to 9 lb
8 to 10	12 to 15 lb
12 to 14	18 to 21 lb
16 to 18	24 lb, or two smaller birds

Based on about 1.5 lb per person, which leaves some leftovers.

Thawing in the fridge

TURKEY SIZE	THAWING TIME
4 to 12 lb	1 to 3 days
12 to 16 lb	3 to 4 days
16 to 20 lb	4 to 5 days
20 to 24 lb	5 to 6 days

In the refrigerator at 40°F or below, allow approximately 24 hours for every 4 to 5 lb. Short on time? USDA's cold water method allows approximately 30 minutes per pound: wrap your turkey securely, making sure the water is not able to leak through the wrapping, submerge it in cold tap water and change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed, and do not refreeze it.

Roasting at 325°F

WEIGHT	UNSTUFFED	STUFFED
8 to 12 lb	2 3/4 to 3 hrs	3 to 3 1/2 hrs
12 to 14 lb	3 to 3 3/4 hrs	3 1/2 to 4 hrs
14 to 18 lb	3 3/4 to 4 1/4 hrs	4 to 4 1/4 hrs
18 to 20 lb	4 1/4 to 4 1/2 hrs	4 1/4 to 4 3/4 hrs
20 to 24 lb	4 1/2 to 5 hrs	4 3/4 to 5 1/4 hrs

A whole turkey is safe at a minimum internal temperature of **165°F**, measured with a food thermometer in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. Stuffing must reach 165°F too.

My turkey

Weight	
Start thawing on	
Into the oven at	
Out to rest at	
Carve at	

Carving in five steps

1. For quality, let the turkey stand 20 minutes.
2. Cut through the skin between leg and body, then pull the leg away and cut through the joint.
3. Separate each drumstick from its thigh at the joint.
4. Cut each breast off the bone in one piece, then slice it across the grain.
5. Remove the wings at the joint and arrange everything on a warm platter.

Leftovers, safely

- Discard any turkey, stuffing and gravy left out over 2 hours; 1 hour above 90°F.
- Divide into smaller portions; refrigerate or freeze in covered shallow containers.
- Use refrigerated leftovers in 3 to 4 days; frozen, in 2 to 6 months for best quality.
- Reheat to 165°F with a food thermometer; bring gravy to a rolling boil.