

TIPS FOR COOKING A TURKEY

*How to Cook the Perfect Turkey - Brined Version
from Cook's Illustrated Online
<http://www.turkeyhelp.com/>*

UNSTUFFED ROAST TURKEY

SERVES 10 to 12

2 cups kosher salt or 1 cup table salt

1 turkey (12 to 15 pounds gross weight), rinsed thoroughly; giblets, neck, and tailpiece removed and reserved to make gravy

3 medium onions, chopped coarse

2 medium carrots, chopped coarse

2 celery stalks, chopped ddd

6 thyme sprigs

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

1. Dissolve salt in 2 gallons of cold water in large (at least 6-gallon) stockpot or clean bucket. Add turkey and refrigerate or set in very cool spot (between 30 and 40 degrees) 8 to 12 hours.

2. Remove turkey from salt water and rinse both cavities and skin under cool running water for several minutes to remove salt. Pat dry inside and out with paper towels. Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 400 degrees. Toss one-third of onion, carrot, celery, and thyme with 1 tablespoon of melted butter and place this mixture in body cavity. Bring turkey legs together and perform a simple truss.

3. Scatter remaining vegetables and thyme over shallow roasting pan. Pour 1 cup water over vegetables. Set V-rack in dpan. Brush entire breast side of turkey with half of remaining butter, then place turkey, breast-side down, on V-rack. Brush entire back of turkey with remaining butter.

4. Roast for 45 minutes. Remove pan from oven (close oven door); baste. With wad of paper toweling in each hand, turn turkey, with one leg/thigh-side up. If liquid in pan has totally evaporated, add additional 1/2 cup water. Return turkey to oven and roast for 15 minutes. Remove turkey from oven again, baste, and again use paper toweling to turn other leg/thigh-side up; roast for another 15 minutes. Remove turkey from oven for final time and turn it breast-side up; roast until breast registers about 165 degrees and thigh registers 170 to 180 degrees on an instant-read thermometer, 30 to 45 minutes. Remove turkey from pan, tent loosely with foil, and let rest 20 to 30 minutes. Carve and serve with gravy.

VARIATION:

Large Unstuffed Roast Turkey

Serves 18-20

Smaller turkeys cook faster and are generally more tender, but sometimes you need a bigger bird for a large holiday crowd. By tinkering with our original recipe, we were able to produce a beautiful large turkey without sacrificing juiciness and flavor. When roasting a large turkey, it's not necessary to roast the bird on each side.

Follow recipe for Unstuffed Roast Turkey, roasting 18- to 20-pound turkey breast-side down in 350 degree oven for 1 hour. Then turn breast-side up and roast for 2 1/2 hours at 250 degrees. Increase oven temperature to 400 degrees and roast 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 hours, until done.

When is the turkey done?

Here's what you want an instant-read thermometer to register:

Breast: 165 degrees

Thigh: 170-180 degrees

Stuffing: 165 degrees

Because the thigh requires the highest internal temperature, it's usually the last part of the turkey to be done. Therefore, it's important to know where, exactly, to insert your instant-read thermometer in order to get a good reading.

How long should the turkey rest before I serve it?

After roasting, tent the turkey loosely with foil and let it rest 20 to 30 minutes so that the juices redistribute through the turkey.

How do I make giblet gravy?

See the recipe on the next page.

How do I make gravy without giblets?

In our recipe for Giblet Pan Gravy, we use the giblets to make a stock that is the base of the gravy, then we dice the heart and gizzard, shred the neck meat, and add all this to the finished gravy. If you prefer, simply omit this step, but still use the giblets to make the stock at the beginning.

GIBLET PAN GRAVY

The gravy is easily made in stages. Complete step 1 while the turkey is brining. Continue with step 2 once the bird is in the oven. Start step 3 once the bird has been removed from the oven and is resting on a carving board. If you prefer not to eat the giblets, you can discard them after you strain the broth at the end of step 1.

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Reserved turkey giblets (except liver), neck, and tailpiece

1 onion, unpeeled and chopped

1 1/2 quarts turkey or chicken stock or 1 quart low-sodium canned chicken broth plus 2 cups water

2 thyme springs

8 parsley stems

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1/4 cup flour

1 cup dry white wine

Salt and ground black pepper

1. Heat oil in soup kettle; add giblets, neck, and tail; saute until golden and fragrant, about 5 minutes. Add onion; continue to sauté until softened, 3 to 4 minutes longer. Reduce heat to low; cover and cook until turkey and onion release their juices, about 20 minutes. Add stock and herbs, bring to boil, then adjust heat to low. Simmer, skimming any scum that rises to surface, until broth is rich and flavorful, about 30 minutes longer. Strain broth (you should have about 5 cups), reserving neck, heart, and gizzard. When cool enough to handle, shred neck meat, remove gristle from gizzard, then dice reserved heart and gizzard. Refrigerate giblets and broth until ready to use.

2. While turkey is roasting, return reserved turkey broth to simmer. Heat butter in large heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-low heat. Whisk in flour. Cook slowly, stirring constantly, until nutty brown and fragrant, 10 to 15 minutes. Whisk in all but 1 cup of hot broth into roux. Bring to boil, then continue to simmer, stirring occasionally, until gravy is lightly thickened and very flavorful, about 30 minutes longer. Set aside until turkey is done.

3. After roasted turkey has been transferred to carving board to rest, spoon out and discard as much fat as possible from roasting pan, leaving caramelized herbs and vegetables. Return gravy in large saucepan to simmer. Place roasting pan over two burners on medium-high heat. Add wine to roasting pan with caramelized vegetables; scrape up browned bits with wooden spoon and boil until reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Add remaining 1 cup broth, then strain deglazed pan juices into gravy, pressing as much juice as possible out of vegetables. Stir diced giblets and shredded meat into gravy; return to boil. Adjust seasonings with salt and pepper. Serve with turkey.

Standard Methods for Cooking a Turkey

Standard cooking time for turkey under 16 pounds--15 minutes per pound

Standard cooking time for turkey over 16 pounds--12 minutes per pound

For a moist turkey, baste every 15-20 minutes with drippings or basting sauces.

If using a meat thermometer, insert it in the center of the thigh muscle, not touching the bone.

Conventional Oven-Open Pan

Cook turkey, breast up on flat rack in shallow pan at 325°. Baste every 15-20 minutes.

This is a dry-heat method which is the easiest method for cooking a turkey. The turkey turns out golden brown with a rich roasted flavor.

Conventional Oven-High Heat

Place a well-basted turkey in a shallow pan with the breast up. Cook at 450° for 30 minutes. Then turn oven down to 350° and continue to cook.

This produces an evenly browned turkey that is juicy and moist.

Conventional Oven-Covered Pan

Cook turkey, breast up, in covered dark enamel pan in 325° oven.

With this method the cooking time is shortened, but the turkey becomes less attractive in appearance than with the open pan method. It does not have a roasted flavor either.

Conventional Oven-Cooking Bag

Place the turkey, breast up, in a floured plastic cooking bag in a shallow open pan. Close the bag loosely and make slits in the top of the bag. Cook at 350°.

The cooking cooks in the drippings in the bag. Although this is easy to clean up the turkey is not nicely browned and has little roasted flavor.

Conventional Oven-Foil-Wrapped

Place the unstuffed turkey, breast up, on a sheet of foil. Wrap loosely and cook in a shallow pan at 450°.

This moist-heat cooking method reduces the time, but the turkey may cook unevenly. Be sure to check the final temperature of the breast and thigh. This can only be used with an unstuffed turkey.

Microwave

Cook the unstuffed turkey, breast down, on high for 4 minutes per pound. Then cook, breast up, at 50% power for 8 minutes per pound.

This cooking method cooks a turkey in about half the time, but you have to make sure you use a browning sauce for even color.

For more info go to www.turkeyhelp.com