

Title:

Turkey the Old-Fashioned Way

Word Count:

1390

Summary:

There are many delicious ways to prepare and serve turkey. It might be deep-fried, brined, poached, grilled...to mention just a few methods of preparation. This article, however, will focus strictly on tips and techniques for preparing perfect turkey the old-fashioned way -- oven roasted.

Keywords:

turkey,roasted turkey,roast turkey,roast turkey recipe,turkey recipe,oven roasted turkey,oven baked turkey,how to truss turkey,how to truss poultry,how to carve turkey,carve turkey,turkey cooking time

Article Body:

There are many delicious ways to prepare and serve turkey. It might be deep-fried, brined, poached, grilled...to mention just a few methods of preparation. This article, however, will focus strictly on tips and techniques for preparing perfect turkey the old-fashioned way -- oven roasted.

Basic Technique for Roasting a Turkey...

1. The safest method for thawing a frozen turkey is by allowing the turkey to thaw in the refrigerator. Be certain to plan ahead...it will take approximately 3 days for a 20 pound turkey to defrost.
2. Everyone wants to prepare enough turkey for the number of guests they serve, and generally desire to have some turkey left over. To determine the correct turkey size that will be needed, see the section below entitled 'How Much Turkey is Enough?'
3. Cooking time will differ depending on whether the turkey was purchased fresh or frozen. Calculate approximate cooking time in a 350F (175C) oven based on the following: 20 minutes per pound for a defrosted turkey, and 10 to 15 minutes per pound for fresh.
4. A turkey will cook more evenly if it is not densely stuffed. As an alternative, flavor may be added by loosely filling the cavity with aromatic

vegetables and/or fruit -- carrots, celery, onions, apples, oranges, kumquats or garlic. Carefully tucking fresh herbs underneath the breast skin will also add flavor.

5. Before roasting, coat the outside of the turkey with vegetable or olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

6. For even roasting, it is best to truss the turkey, and especially so if roasting stuffed poultry. (See 'How to Truss a Turkey' below.)

7. Set the turkey on a rack in a large roasting pan to promote maximum air and heat circulation and to ensure that it cooks evenly. To yield moister, juicier white meat, place the turkey 'breast-down' on the rack. This technique will prevent the turkey breast from overcooking and becoming dry.

8. Set the roasting pan on the lowest rack of the oven to keep the turkey away from the top, which is the hottest part of the oven.

9. Once the turkey is cooking in the oven, resist the temptation to 'peek' inside by opening the oven door. Opening and closing the oven door will cause the temperature to fluctuate, which will only increase the likelihood of a dry turkey. Avoid opening the oven door until approximately 45 minutes before the turkey expected to be done.

10. After checking for doneness (see 'When is the Turkey Done?' guidelines below), remove roasting pan from the oven, tent the turkey with foil and let it 'rest' for approximately 15 minutes before carving (see tips on 'How to Carve a Turkey' below). If additional time is needed to prepare gravy, heat up side dishes, etc., the turkey may be allowed to sit at room temperature (covered) for up to an hour without losing too much heat.

11. Refrigerate any leftover turkey within 2 to 3 hours of preparation. Store in airtight, shallow containers to allow adequate circulation of cool air; date and label the containers. Turkey may be safely stored refrigerated for approximately 5 days and frozen for up to 4 months.

=====

How Much Turkey is Enough?

On average, to provide 2 servings of turkey for each guest (and allowing for leftovers), the suggested weights are as follows:

10 pound turkey for 6 people

12 pound turkey for 8 people
15 pound turkey for 10 people
18 pound turkey for 12 people
21 pound turkey for 14 people
24 pound turkey for 16 people

- If you will be serving more than 16 guests (a recommended turkey size of more than 24 pounds), buy two turkeys that equal the total suggested weights.

- If the recommended turkey size is less than 12 pounds, you may wish to buy a turkey breast to roast.

=====

How to Truss a Turkey...

To 'truss' means to secure poultry or meat into a compact shape. Trussing will ensure even roasting. The following technique is recommended when roasting poultry, especially a stuffed turkey.

1. To truss with string, take a piece of butcher's string about three times the length of the turkey. Place the turkey on its back, tail end nearest to you. Slide the string underneath so that it is cradling the turkey in the center of its back.
2. Gently pull the string up the sides...then around the wings. Pull the strings toward you, close to the breast, so that the wings are held against the body.
3. Cross the strings at the base of the breast, then wrap each string around the end of a drumstick.
4. Tie the ends of the string together, cinching it tightly so that the legs cross.
5. Finally, lift the turkey so that the tail end is up and wrap the string around the tail. Tie the string, pulling tightly so that the cavity is covered by the tail.

=====

When is the Turkey Done?

<> You will want to test your instant-read or traditional meat thermometer a few

days before preparing the turkey to ensure it is properly calibrated. Place the thermometer in a pot of boiling water. It should register 212F (100C) -- water's boiling point at sea level. If the reading does not reach the desired temperature, you will want to buy a new thermometer.

<> Keep a careful eye on the thermometer during the last half hour of cooking since the internal temperature may rise rapidly toward the end.

<> Using a meat thermometer, test for doneness in the thickest, meatiest parts of the turkey:

Test the widest section of the breast near the wing joint; the temperature should be 165F (73C).

Test the legs at the top of the thigh, near the hip joint; the temperature should be 180 (82C).

If cooking a stuffed turkey, determine the internal temperature of the stuffing as well; it should be at least 165F (73C).

<> If using an instant-read thermometer, insert it deep enough to reach the heat sensor (the indentation about two-inches from the tip).

<> Also examine the juices and oils at the bottom of the pan that are released during cooking. If they have a pinkish tinge, continue roasting; if they are clear, the turkey is probably done. (Try to insert the thermometer as infrequently as possible, to prevent the juices from escaping.)

<> Another way of checking for doneness is to move the leg up and down. The looser it becomes, the closer it is to being done.

=====

How to Carve a Turkey...

To carve a turkey, it is essential that you use a sharp carving knife and a good, heavy-weight fork. The following instructions will make carving a turkey almost effortless.

1. Begin by cutting through the skin where the leg meets the breast. Pull the leg away from the body with the fork and continue to cut down, close to the body, to find the joint where the thigh meets the body. Pull the leg out further and slice right through the joint to remove the leg and thigh.

2. Place the leg skin-side down and locate the line at the joint where the thigh and the drumstick meet. Holding your knife along this line of the thigh, you can slice easily through the joint. If you hit resistance, adjust your angle and try again. Cut down through the line and separate the thigh from the drumstick. Repeat this process with the other leg.

3. Remove the wishbone (actually the collarbone) from the turkey. Removing the bone will prevent it from splintering when you carve the breast meat.

4. Next, run your knife through the skin along one side of the breastbone. Then cut down along the ribs, pulling the meat gently away from the bones in one large piece, leaving behind as little meat as possible.

5. When you reach the wing joint, cut through it and continue to remove the breast from the body. Repeat with the other side.

6. Finally, remove the wings and slice the breast meat before serving. (For even, attractive slices, cut the meat against the grain.)

=====

So, there you have it...everything you need to know about successfully roasting a turkey.

As you can see, preparing a turkey by adhering to the techniques above is not at all difficult. The small amount of effort you invest will be well rewarded when the final product reaches the serving table and your guests rave about how absolutely marvelous it is. Just remember one thing: serving a juicy, flavorful roasted turkey does not have to be reserved solely for the holiday season -- it's wonderful anytime of the year.

Copyright ©2005 Janice Faulk Duplantis