

How to Cook, Store and Look after Your Turkey

Preparation and Cooking

The size of a turkey can be a problem, not just for cooking but also for storage and for thawing. We at Feast! source the finest fresh free range turkeys. Some turkeys are sold frozen and we are more than obliging to thaw it out for you, unlike supermarkets

If you do buy a frozen turkey below is the best guide to thawing.

- Put the turkey on a tray at the bottom of the refrigerator, where fluids can't drip over other foods.
- Or you can thaw it overnight in a sink full of cold water, changing the water at least once and turning the bird over at the same time. Remove it to the refrigerator next morning to continue thawing.
- A medium or large turkey will need 1-3 days to thaw completely.
- Once the legs can move freely and there is no ice in the cavity, drain the turkey, dry it very well and cook it within 24 hours

The ideal solution to the size problem when roasting is to have 2 ovens, one for the turkey and the other for the vegetables or side dishes.

Alternatively, you could braise the vegetables on top of the stove, serve beautiful simply boiled green beans, or abandon hot vegetables and serve a selection of salads. Or decide to serve the turkey at room temperature, leaving the oven free for the 45 minutes-1 hour it will take to roast the vegetables.

Roasting Tips

- Roasting a turkey breast side down for the first will help keep the turkey moist. Turn over after the first hour to finish cooking. Place the turkey in a pre-heated oven on the lowest rack.
- Vegetables layered at the base of the roasting tray, like carrot, celery and onion adds flavour to the juices for delicious gravy.
- If you feel your turkey is browning too quickly, cover the bird lightly with foil.
- If you are not placing any stuffing inside the bird, place sliced lemon, or a whole onion in the cavity of the turkey, the flavour will infuse the meat.
- If you have chosen to use an oven bag, open the bag for the final 15-20 minutes to allow the skin to crisp.

Whole turkey

Remember if your turkey is frozen, it can take up to two days to thaw in the fridge.

After stuffing the turkey tie the turkey's legs together with unwaxed cooking string, tuck the neck flap under the bird. Make a mixture of the butter below and baste the turkey generously with half, putting the rest aside. A good idea is to then place bacon slices over the turkey breast, legs and wings to add flavour and keep the moisture in the meat during cooking, to do this, you will need about 12 slices of bacon.

After placing the turkey in a large roasting pan, completely cover the turkey with non-stick baking paper and then tuck foil over the top of the pan to seal. Roast the turkey in an oven preheated at 180°C, for one hour. Remove the turkey, unwrap it and baste it with more of the butter mixture. Re-cover and roast for a further 1½ hours, basting every half hour or so. Then, remove the turkey from the oven again, discarding the foil, baking paper and bacon, baste the bird again and roast uncovered for a further 25 – 30 minutes or until it is golden and just cooked through. You will know the turkey is ready when the juices run clear when the thickest part of the thigh is pierced with a skewer.

Seasoned Butter for Roast Turkey

This recipe makes sufficient seasoning mix for a 5kg turkey, but quantities can be doubled easily for a larger bird.

- 150g butter
- Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves
- 1 bay leaf, torn into small pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Melt butter in frying pan and drop in lemon zest. Warm over a gentle heat for a few minutes, then tip into an electric blender and add thyme and bay leaf. Give mixture a good whiz to pulverise herbs, then tip into a bowl. Stir in lemon juice, salt and pepper and mix well. Use before butter sets solid, rub generously onto inside and outside of bird.

Classic Bread and Sausage Stuffing for Turkey

These quantities will make plenty of stuffing for a 5kg turkey.

- 80g butter
- 6 chicken livers, trimmed
- 200g prosciutto cru do or smoked streaky bacon, diced
- 1 large onion, minced
- 200g pork mince
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped sage leaves
- 1 tablespoon marsala, port or Muscat
- 5 cups fresh white breadcrumbs
- 2 tablespoons freshly chopped parsley
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped lemon thyme
- 2 eggs
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

Heat butter in a frying pan and sauté livers for 1 minute each side until browned. Transfer livers to a plate and reserve. Add prosciutto and onion to pan and sauté gently until onion has softened. Add sausage meat and sage and sauté until meat just changes colour. Stir in wine, and then tip contents of frying pan into a bowl with any juices that have oozed onto the plate. Add all remaining ingredients, stirring to combine.

******Allow stuffing to cool completely before stuffing the bird, and do not stuff the bird more than 6 hours before cooking it.**

Tips for stuffing your bird

A turkey has two cavities: the neck and the body.

- Calculate the weight of the bird including the weight of the stuffing. The stuffing must be allowed to cool completely after it is made and before it is used to avoid bacterial activity. The stuffing will need to be packed loosely as all stuffing will swell.
- if the turkey has been stuffed and trussed a few hours in advance, cover it with a tea towel and allow 1 hour for it to come to room temperature before cooking, even if it is 30oC outside.

Roasted Turkey Roll

- 1 x 2-4 kg turkey roll
- 200g butter
- 2 cloves garlic finely chopped
- Grated zest 1 large lemon
- Salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- Water

Sauce

- Turkey roasting juices
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- 200 ml dry whit or red wine
- 1 cup poultry stock
- Redcurrant, apple jelly or quince

Remove turkey roll from refrigerator 30 minutes before cooking. Preheat oven to 200 deg C. Calculate cooking time, allowing 30 minutes per kg plus the 20 minutes resting time. Heat butter and garlic in a frying pan, stirring, until butter has melted and garlic is fragrant but has not begun to brown.

Remove pan from heat and add lemon zest. Spread turkey skin on your workbench.

Pour ½ cup water into baking dish and put into oven to cook. Turn halfway through cooking and replenish water every 30 minutes to stop juices from burning. Pierce with a thin skewer to test whether turkey is cooked- the juices should run clear. If using a thermometer, the internal temperature should be 70 deg C) when done.

Remove roll to a warm platter, then ease off muslin and cover meat loosely with foil. Keep warm and allow resting for at least 20 minutes.

To make the sauce, tip juices from baking dish into a jug and allow settling, then spooning off and discarding of the fat. Add flour to baking dish and stir and scrape over a medium heat to loosen any stuck-on browned bits. Add wine, allowing it to bubble up and scraping some more, then add stock and reserved juices, and stir until smooth. Add redcurrant jelly, if you like.

Using a sharp knife, cut thick slices from the turkey roll and transfer slices to a hot serving platter and spoon over a little of the sauce. The dish can be served with traditional roast vegetables or maybe a dish of asparagus or perfect small beans or small carrots or shelled peas.