

Thawing & Cooking Your Bird

Thanksgiving is no time to wing it, especially when it comes to roasting a turkey. Even though you've cooked a bird dozens of times, you find yourself double-checking charts to verify your math, from determining the size you'll need, to how long thawing will take, and how long to keep it in the oven. These guidelines will take the panic out of cooking your turkey.



THAWING YOUR TURKEY

We strongly recommend thawing frozen turkeys in the refrigerator to avoid bacteria that can occur from room temperature thawing. Whether you've chosen a fresh or frozen turkey, keep it wrapped and place on a pan, on the lowest shelf in your refrigerator to prevent cross Contamination.

COOKING YOUR TURKEY

To test for doneness, use a meat thermometer. Perfectly cooked breast temperature is 170 degrees, thigh meat should register at 180 degrees.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Set oven rack to lowest position.
2. Unwrap turkey and remove the giblets and neck from the body. Refrigerate or set aside for further use (optional).
3. Place turkey breast side up on a rack in a roasting pan. (Note: You can roast the bird with the breast side down until the last hour. This makes the white meat juicier, but less golden in color.)
4. Cover the breast tightly with aluminum foil before roasting. The foil slows the cooking process so the white and dark meat will cook at the same rate.
5. Baste the turkey every half hour, adding more hot water to the pan if the drippings evaporate.
6. For the last 45 minutes, increase the heat to 400 degrees, remove the foil from the breast and baste every 10 to 15 minutes.
7. Test for doneness. If meat is to proper temperature, remove the roasting pan from the oven. Tent the turkey with foil and let rest for 20 minutes before carving. This allows the juices to be reabsorbed, yielding juicier breast meat.
8. Reserve pan drippings for gravy, if desired.

TURKEY BRINE

The turkey needs to soak for about 24 hours, so plan accordingly.

7 quarts (28 cups) water

1 1/2 cups kosher salt

6 bay leaves

2 tablespoons whole coriander seeds

1 tablespoon dried juniper berries

2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns

1 tablespoon fennel seeds

1 teaspoon black or brown mustard seeds

1 fresh whole turkey (18 to 20 pounds), patted dry, neck and giblets reserved for stock, liver reserved for stuffing

1 bottle dry Riesling

2 medium onions, thinly sliced

6 garlic cloves, crushed

1 bunch fresh thyme

1. Bring 1 quart water, salt, bay leaves, and spices to a simmer, stirring until salt has dissolved. Let cool 5 minutes.

2. Line a 5-gallon container with a large brining or oven-roasting bag. Place turkey in bag. Add salt mixture, remaining 6 quarts (24 cups) water, and the other ingredients. Tie bag; if turkey is not submerged, weight it with a plate. Refrigerate 24 hours, flipping turkey once.

Source: <https://www.marthastewart.com/343940/turkey-brine>



OYSTER STUFFING

2 pounds (about 2 loaves) sandwich bread or soft Italian or French bread, cut into 3/4-inch dice, about 5 quarts

1 stick unsalted butter, plus more for greasing dish

1 pound sweet Italian sausage, removed from casing

1 large onion, finely chopped (about 2 cups)

2 large stalks celery, finely chopped (about 1 cup)

1/2 medium fennel bulb, finely chopped (about 1 cup)

2 medium cloves garlic, minced (about 2 teaspoons)

1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme leaves

3 cups homemade chicken stock or low-sodium broth, divided

3 large eggs

2 tablespoons minced fresh tarragon leaves

1/4 cup minced flat-leaf parsley leaves, divided

2 cups raw shucked oysters and their liquor (about 32 medium oysters), oysters chopped

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Adjust oven racks to lower-middle and upper-middle positions. Preheat oven to 275°F. Spread bread evenly over 2 rimmed baking sheets. Stagger sheets on oven racks and bake until bread is completely dried, about 50 minutes total, rotating sheets and stirring bread cubes several times during baking. Remove from oven and allow to cool. Increase oven temperature to 350°F.

2. In a large Dutch oven, melt butter over medium-high heat until foaming subsides, without allowing butter to brown, about 2 minutes. Add sausage and mash with stiff whisk or potato masher to break up into fine pieces (largest pieces should be no bigger than 1/4 inch). Cook, stirring frequently, until only a few bits of pink remain, about 8 minutes. Add onion, celery, fennel, garlic, and thyme and cook, stirring frequently, until vegetables are softened, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and add half of chicken stock.

3. Whisk remaining chicken stock, eggs, tarragon, and 3 tablespoons parsley in a medium bowl until homogeneous. Stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, slowly pour egg mixture into sausage mixture. Add bread cubes, oysters, and oyster liquor and fold gently until evenly mixed. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

4. Transfer stuffing to a buttered 9- by 13-inch rectangular baking dish (or 10- by 14-inch oval dish) and bake until browned on top and an instant read-thermometer reads 150°F when inserted into center of dish, about 45 minutes. Remove from oven, let cool for 5 minutes, sprinkle with remaining parsley, and serve.

Source: <https://www.seriousseats.com/2015/11/how-to-make-oyster-stuffing-thanksgiving-white-bread-cornbread.html>

TURKEY GRAVY

6 cups turkey or chicken stock

Roux: 1/3 cup unsalted butter and 1/3 cup all-purpose flour

1–2 cups skimmed and strained roast turkey drippings

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Roux: Melt butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Whisk in flour. Reduce heat to low; whisk until roux is golden brown, about 2 minutes. Roux can be made 2 days ahead. Let cool, cover, and chill.

Assembly: Bring 6 cups stock to a boil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add turkey drippings. (If you're short on drippings, skim fat from pan and add 1–2 cups water. Scrape up browned bits with a wooden spoon; strain liquid into stock.) Season with salt and pepper.

Whisk in roux. Reduce heat to low; simmer gently 5 minutes for gravy to thicken and flavors to meld.

[https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/turkey-gravy!](https://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/turkey-gravy)