

Fresh Turkey FAQ

Storing Your Turkey

The best temperature for your turkey is between 28 and 34 degrees F. Properly stored farm-fresh turkeys keep well for 10 days or more. Turn the fridge to its coldest setting, and put the turkey into the coldest part of the fridge (lower back portion). Leave the turkey in its plastic bag or transfer it to another bag.

An alternative to the fridge is a large (40-quart or so) picnic cooler. Put the turkey, with neck and giblets removed, into the cooler and pack ice around it. You can also use chemical gel-ice packs. Close the cooler tightly. Check it daily and re-ice if necessary.

Another option is to freeze the turkey just over one night this weekend to deeply chill the bird without freezing it through. Then remove, and place back into the lower back portion of the refrigerator until cooking time.

Roasting Your Turkey

The end you want to keep in view is a thoroughly cooked yet moist and tender turkey. A farm-fresh turkey properly handled is the best way to achieve that end. Farm-fresh native turkeys roast faster than agribusiness turkeys, so follow these guidelines. Before roasting, rinse the turkey and the giblets under cold running water.

Preheat the oven to between 300 and 325 degrees. A hotter oven will dry out your turkey. An oven below 300 risks extending the time that the bird will be between 45 and 140 degrees, the temperature range in which bacteria multiply fastest.

If you stuff the turkey, put the stuffing into the bird immediately before putting the turkey into the oven. For turkeys up to 20 pounds, roast for 15 minutes a pound. Thus, a 16-pound bird should roast for about 4 hours. Roast larger birds for 12 minutes a pound. If you stuff the turkey, add 30 minutes to the total roasting time.

Some customers report that their farm-fresh turkeys have roasted even faster than times given here. So, begin checking for doneness at least an hour before the turkey is expected to be done. It is usually not necessary to baste a farm-fresh turkey. Some customers report good results with a roasting bag. Other recommend covering the legs with foil after a couple of hours to prevent drying.

Tests for Doneness

There are at least three tests of doneness:

- The most reliable test is a meat thermometer. The temperature in the deep breast should be 160 to 165 degrees. In the deep thigh, temperature should be 180 to 185 degrees. Happily, these two temperatures occur at the same time.
- A second test of doneness is to stick a fork into breast and thigh. When the juices run clear, not pink or tan, the turkey is done.
- The third test is to lift the leg away from the thigh. If it separates easily, the turkey is done.

When the turkey is done, cool it at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes before carving. This lets the meat solidify a bit more and makes for easier and more attractive carving.

Refrigerate leftovers no more than 2 hours after removing the turkey from the oven. Wrapped tightly in aluminum foil or freezer-grade plastic, the roasted meat can be frozen.

Source: FAQ info is from TheTurkeyFarm.com