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## TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

The Texas A&M University System

S.O.S. Shopper:

The holiday season is nearly here, with good food an important part of the scene. I hope this letter on *Turkey Tips* will help you with your holiday celebrations.

The S.O.S. letter series and other educational programs are provided at no charge by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Extension publications are available from my office to give you shopping guides for other items you may find on sale this month. If you would like to receive any of these bulletins or learn more about other Extension programs, contact me.

Happy Sales!

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County Extension Agent



# HOLIDAY FOODS . . .

## Turkey Tips

Holidays mean fun and festive foods. Dress up your holidays with tasty turkey and all the trimmings. This letter gives consumer tips on buying, storing and cooking turkey.

### How Much to Buy

Turkeys are a good buy now while they are in season. The amount to buy depends on the appetites of those eating, but below is a guide for servings per person. If you are cooking for persons with hearty appetites, figure the number of servings you will need rather than the number of people to be fed.

### Turkey Buying Guide

Roasted, whole	¾ pound per serving for birds less than 12 pounds ½ to ¾ pound per serving for birds 12 pounds or more
Roasted, quarter or half	½ to ¾ pound per serving for birds 12 pounds or more
Thighs or drumsticks, braised	½ to ¾ pound per serving for birds 12 pounds or more
Boneless, rolled turkey	¼ pound per serving

### Storing Methods

Fresh, ready-to-cook poultry (whole or in parts) is available in plastic wrapping. Remove the wrapping and place the meat on a dish or tray, covering loosely with waxed paper or foil. Refrigerate immediately. Turkey stored this way will keep for a day or two.

Frozen turkey should be placed in the freezer and held at 0° F or below until time to thaw for cooking. For top quality, do not keep frozen turkey more than 6 months before cooking.

Commercially frozen, stuffed turkeys should not be thawed before cooking. Follow one of the following recommended procedures for thawing unstuffed frozen turkeys.

### Thawing Turkey

Weight (pounds)	Refrigerator* (days)	Cool Water (hours)	Room Temperature (hours)
4 to 6	1 to 1½	3 to 4	6 to 8
8 to 12	1½ to 2	4 to 6	8 to 12
12 to 16	2 to 2½	6 to 7	12 to 14
16 to 20	2½ to 3	7 to 8	14 to 16
20 to 24	3 to 3½	8 to 10	16 to 18

\*in wrapper

Frozen turkeys and turkey parts need to be cooked soon after thawing. Frozen turkey may be placed directly in the oven, but the cooking time will be longer.

### Cooking Turkey

Ready-to-cook turkeys require little cleaning. Wash the bird in cool water and dry with paper towels.

Salt the body cavity well. Grease the skin of the bird with softened fat or oil. Place breast side up on a rack in a

shallow pan and roast at 325° F until the internal temperature reaches 180° F. A meat thermometer may be inserted into the thickest part of the breast or thigh muscle. The following chart indicates the approximate cooking time to reach the desired temperature.

Weight (pounds)	Time (hours)
6 to 8	3 to 3½
8 to 12	3½ to 4½
12 to 16	4½ to 5½
16 to 20	5½ to 6½
20 to 24	6½ to 7

The goal of turkey cookery is to have the meat completely done, but still juicy and tender. The skin should have a brownish-yellow color and be moist and tender to the touch. Consumers should pay close attention to cooking instructions provided by the processor for the best results.

### Stuffing a Turkey

A stuffed turkey is an ideal place for harmful bacteria to grow. However, if special precautions are followed, stuffed turkey can be safe to eat.

Stuffing should be placed inside the turkey cavity just prior to roasting. NEVER hold a stuffed turkey at room temperature or in the refrigerator. The roasting time will be longer to reach the desired 180° F in a stuffed turkey.

After serving, remove the remaining stuffing from the cavity before storing in the refrigerator or freezer.

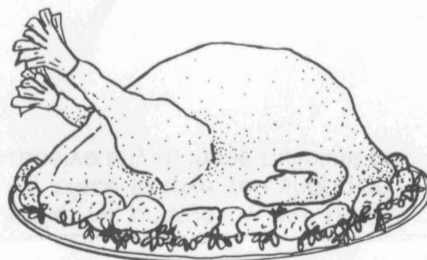
You can bake a dish of stuffing alongside the roasting unstuffed turkey.

### Serving a Holiday Meal

Turkey will be the highlight of your holiday meal. Allow the turkey to stand 30 minutes before carving. This will make carving easier and the turkey will be tastier.

Most families have special foods they serve with the holiday meals. Remember to include foods from the basic four food groups to insure good nutrition.

Take care in storing leftovers so they will be safe to eat and good for another meal. Leftover turkey may be stored in the refrigerator for a few days or in the freezer for longer periods.



### More Information

For recipes and further information on turkeys and holiday meals, the following publications are available from the county Extension office.

- L-1415 *Purchasing and Using Turkey Products*
- B-1065 *All-Time Favorites — Chicken and Turkey (30¢)*
- B-254 *Christmas Time at Home (35¢)*

Prepared by Extension foods and nutrition specialists, The Texas A&M University System.

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