Tips and How To Cook: Thanksgiving Turkey

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Storing

A frozen turkey can be bought and stored months in advanced, if kept frozen.

Prepping

Thawing your turkey safety is a crucial process to stop bacteria growth. You can either:

1. Place turkey in its original packaging in a tray or pan in the refrigerator and allow 24 hours of thawing time per 4-5 pounds of turkey. A 10-pound turkey would require 48 hours of thawing in the refrigerator.
2. A faster process is to submerge the turkey in its original packaging in cold water. The water must be changed every 30 minutes. The turkey should remain in cold water for 30 minutes for every pound then needs to be cooked immediately. A 10 pound turkey would require 5 hours of thawing in cold water.
3. Make sure you do not wash your turkey, or that will spread more bacteria. Remove the giblets and neck from the cavity before cooking, and cook separately.



Basting

Pre-Basted: already injected with water, broth, oils and/or spice
Un-basted: does not have any additional ingredients

If a turkey is already basted, no spices, oils or seasonings are required. An un-basted turkey needs to be seasoned, oiled, or spiced before cooking.

Turkeys need to be baked in a preheated 325-degree oven. A thermometer is needed at the thickest part of the breast, innermost part of the thigh, and innermost part of the wing to check the internal temperature.

*University of Illinois Extension: Choosing Your Turkey

Turkey Quesadillas

Ingredients (Serves 8)
2 cups shredded cooked turkey breast
2 cups cheddar cheese
1 can black beans(drained and rinsed)
1 avocado (mashed)
2 tomatoes (diced)
2-3 sprigs green onions (diced)
2 tbsp pickled jalapeno (diced)
¼ cup cilantro (minced)
Whole wheat tortillas

Directions:
1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Mix and season with salt and pepper.
3. Add ½ cup mix to half of one tortilla and fold over.
4. Add enough oil to cover bottom of skillet.
5. Place the tortilla in the pan and cook for 4-5 minutes or until goten brown. Flip over and cook on the other side. Serve warm.

Turkey size	Unstuffed Cooking Times	Stuffed Cooking Time
4-8 pounds	1.5-3.25 hours	2.5 -3.5 hours
8-12 pounds	2.75-3 hours	3-3.5 hours
12-16 pounds	3-4 hours	3.5-4.25 hours
16-20 pounds	4-5 hours	4.25-5.25 hours
20-24 pounds	4.5-5 hours	5.25-6.25 hours

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Tips and Tricks: Thanksgiving Leftovers

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Storing Leftovers

- Store all cooked food needs in the refrigerator or freezer within two hours of cooking to prevent foodborne illness. It's okay to put food that is still warm in the refrigerator.
- Turkey leftovers should be stored in a shallow dish to ensure proper cooling.
- Different foods have different shelf lives. Cranberry sauce, fruit pies and bread will last up to one week in the fridge, while things with dairy, eggs, turkey, gravy, and stuffing need to be consumed within 3 to 4 days.

Re-Heating Leftovers

- Bring all sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil.
- When reheating foods in the microwave, keep them covered and rotated while heating. Use a microwave safe dish.
- Microwaves can have cold spots. Be sure to stir periodically and check that all parts of the food are warmed up to 165 degrees.

Notes

- Don't throw away the turkey carcass! Use that with veggie scraps to make a tasty homemade bone broth.
- If your stuffing dries out in the fridge, add some broth when reheating.
- Freeze gravy in ice cube trays to use later. Once frozen, transfer the gravy cubes to a freezer bag.
- Dampen your leftover bread with water and toast in the oven or toaster to bring it back to life.

*FoodSafety.gov: Thanksgiving Leftovers for Safe Keeping, Weekend Grazing

Cranberry Vinaigrette Dressing w/ Green Salad

Dressing Ingredients
(Suggested serving: 1-2 tablespoons)
1/3 cup of cranberry sauce
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon dijon mustard
1 lemon
Salt and pepper to taste
Salad Ingredients:
Kale or mixed greens (chopped)
1 cucumber (sliced)
1 small red onion (diced)
Craisins
Pecans

Directions:

1. For the dressing: Add all ingredients to a blender and blend on medium speed until combined.
2. For the salad: If using kale, add to the bowl and massage in a small amount of olive oil and salt. This will recue bitterness and soften the leaves.
3. Add cucumber slices, red onions, craisins, and pecans.
4. Drizzle salad with vinaigrette dressing and toss. Enjoy!

Tuscan Pappa al Pomodoro

Ingredients (Serves 6)
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil,
Pinch red pepper flakes (optional)
2 medium cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1/2 medium onion, minced (about 1/2 cup)
1 (28-ounce) can whole plum tomatoes, crushed by hand, with juices
2 sprigs fresh basil, plus torn leaves for serving
1 package of stuffing
2 cups warm vegetable broth, plus more as needed (see notes)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

1. In a large saucepan, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add red pepper flakes and garlic and cook, stirring, until garlic just begins to turn golden. Add onion and cook, stirring, just until softened, about 5 minutes. Add crushed tomatoes and their juices, along with basil sprigs, and bring to a simmer.
2. Stir in bread. Ladle stock on top, stirring to combine. Simmer bread, adding more stock as needed, until bread is completely softened and custardy and soup has thickened to a porridge-like consistency, about 25 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Discard basil sprigs.
3. Spoon into bowls, generously drizzle with olive oil, and grind black pepper on top. Garnish with torn basil leaves and serve. Enjoy!

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Tips and Tricks:
Staying Healthy During the Holidays

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Do

- Pair sweet breakfast items like cinnamon buns, cakes, and cookies with a protein to create a more balanced meal.
- Take a walk after dinner.
- Think about which leafy greens can be incorporated in the meal.
- Enjoy your food and company with friends and family.
- Wash your hands before eating.
- Stay hydrated.
- Choose your favorite nutritious food to add to your plate.

Don't

- Let holiday meals cause you guilt.
- Skip meals to make up for a "splurge."
- Restrict holiday treats or meals.
- Drink your calories in sodas or punches.

Sweet Potato Muffins

Ingredients (Serves 6)

½ cup canned sweet potatoes
¼ cup brown sugar
¼ cup vegetable oil
1 large eggs
¾ cups all-purpose flour
½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp vanilla extract

Directions:

1. Pre-heat oven to 350 F. Prepare a 6-cup muffin pan using paper liners or oil to grease it.
2. Drain all excess liquid from canned potatoes in a bowl and set aside. Mash canned potatoes until smooth with a fork. You can puree the potatoes instead, if you prefer.
3. In a large bowl, combine wet ingredients. Whisk together the potatoes, sugar, oil, eggs, vanilla, and some of the liquid from the can (no more than 1/8 cup) until smooth.
4. Begin to add in dry ingredients: flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt. Fold gently, stirring by hand until just combined. Do not overmix.
5. Divide the batter evenly into the 6 muffin cups. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
6. Enjoyl

Regular Option	Healthier Option
Slice of pie for breakfast	Slice of pie for breakfast with a glass of milk and sliced fruit
Sitting on the couch after dinner	Going for a walk after dinner
Drinking fruit punch with dinner	Drinking water or seltzer with dinner
Heavy pour of gravy over your potatoes	Light pour of gravy over your potatoes

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Tips and Tricks: Holiday Canned Meals

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Common Food Pantry Items

- Green Beans
- Corn
- Peas
- Pumpkin
- Sweet potato/potatoes
- Cranberry sauce
- Gravy
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Boxed stuffing
- Crispy fried onions
- Creamed soups

Revamps

- Use your can of cream soup in a chicken bake. Add in your canned green beans and finish with crispy fried onions.
- Create scallop potatoes with a creamed soup.
- Canned soups can also be an enchilada filling
- Canned cranberry sauce is delicious over yogurt. Try Greek yogurt for extra protein.
- Make a pot pie with your canned gravy.
- Use veggie broth or buttermilk instead of water to make the instant mashed potatoes more flavorful. You can add in canned potatoes as well.
- Add a dallop of canned pumpkin to your instant mashed potatoes to add more flavor and nutrition.
- Use the crispy fried onions to bread chicken and bake.

Pumpkin pasta with spinach and walnut

Ingredients (Serves 6)

1 pound or 1 package of pasta cooked according to directions on the package
1 can pumpkin puree
3-4 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoon olive oil
1 can coconut milk
2 cups fresh baby spinach
½ cup walnuts
1 small can tomato sauce

Directions:

1. Roughly chop ½ cup of walnuts and toast in skillet for 5 minutes, frequently shaking pan. Remove from the heat.
2. Boil a pot of water for pasta. Cook the pasta until al dente. Reserve 1 cup of pasta water aside.
3. Add 2 tablespoons of olive oil to skillet and add in garlic. Cook on low flame until soft.
4. Whisk in tomato, pumpkin and coconut milk, slowly adding in pasta water until smooth.
5. Season with salt and pepper, and cook for 5-7 minutes.
6. Toss pasta and spinach until coated in sauce.
7. Sprinkle with tossed walnuts.

Tips and Tricks:
Expiration, Use-By and Sell-By Dates

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Background Information

- Most dates on food packages indicate when food tastes best, not when it becomes unsafe to eat.
- There are 60 different date labels in the United States.
- Dating is not required by U.S Federal Law except for infant formula and baby food.

What Dates Mean

- Expiration Date / EXP: Expired. Baby formula and baby food expiration dates need to be thrown out by that date.
- Use-By: The last recommended date to use the product. This is not a safety date unless it is on baby formula.
- Best if Used-By and Best Before Date: This is a suggestion for when the food quality is best. Food is generally safe if consumed past this date, it just may not have as good flavor, texture, or appearance.
- Sell-By date: This date is for the store to know when to remove the product off the shelf. Items are safe to eat but they may not taste as fresh.
- Guaranteed Fesh: This date is commonly used for perishable baked goods. Freshness is not guaranteed past this date but the food can still be edible.
- Pack Date: This is the date the item was packed and usually put on canned or boxed items. It is usually coded with "YYMMDD" or "MMDDYY". It is not an expiration date, sell by, or best by date.

*UConn Extension: Expiration, Use-By and Sell-By Dates: What do They Really Mean?
**USDA Food Product Dating

Food for Thought

Based on USDA guidelines...

- Milk is good for about a week after the "sell by" date.
- Cheese can last from a few weeks to a few months past the "sell by" date. Soft cheeses have a shorter shelf life, while hard cheese last up to 4 months past the sell by date.
- Eggs can keep for three to five weeks past the "sell by" date.
- Fresh chicken, turkey and ground meats should be cooked or frozen within two days.
- Fresh beef, pork, and lamb should be cooked or frozen with 3 to 5 days.
- Cooking or freezing food always extends the time it can keep.
- Dates relate to the unopened package. Once the package is open, the date is no longer relevant.
- Always refrigerate leftovers in a covered container, not a can.
- Cans should never be frozen.
- Trust your vision and smell; if it looks and/or smells bad, it isn't safe to eat.
- Never buy or consume food in dented cans.

Tips and Tricks: Holiday Beverages

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Holiday Beverages Beware!

- Most holiday drinks are filled with added sugar, are high in saturated fats ("bad fats"), and are calorically-dense.
- They often lack fiber or any added nutrition and are not hydrating.
- Think of drinks like coquito, espresso martinis, and eggnog think as dessert drinks that you keep at 1 drink max.

Homemade Apple Cider

Ingredients (Serves 6)

2 quarts 100% apple juice
1 apple, unpeeled and cut in half
1 small orange, cut into slices
2 teaspoons whole cloves
2 cinnamon sticks
1 pinch of nutmeg
1 pinch of allspice

Directions

1. Insert the whole cloves into the apple halves on both sides.
2. In a large pot, heat the apple juice over medium heat. Once heated add the remaining ingredients and simmer for 20 minutes.
3. Remove the apple halves, orange slices, cinnamon sticks and any cloves remaining in the pot. Serve warm and enjoy!

Swaps

Classic Holiday Beverage	Healthier Swap
Full fat Hot Chocolate	Skim milk hot chocolate
Fruit Punch	Seltzer with 100% fruit juice
Regular Soda	Diet Soda
Lemonade	Half Lemonade Half unsweetened iced-tea

Holiday Drink Recipe

Dragon Fruit Lemonade

Ingredients (Serves 8 8-ounce cups)

1. 1 cup lemon juice (5-8 medium lemons)
2. 1 cup warm water
3. ¾ cup honey
4. 6-7 cups cold water
5. 1 cup frozen dragon fruit chunks

Instructions

1. Roll lemons and then juice into a pitcher
2. To the same pitcher, add warm water and honey. Mix until the honey is completely dissolved. This will be harder to do if you mix it with cold water.
3. Add cold water and mix well. Then add in frozen dragon fruit and store in fridge for a minimum of 30 minutes or until chilled.
4. Remove fro fridge, give it one final stir and enjoy!

Oat Milk Egg Nog

Ingredients (Serves 4 8-ounce cups)

1. 3 cups creamy oat milk
2. 1/3 raw cashews, soaked in boiling water for 15 minutes, then drained
3. 2 tbsp pure maple syrup (adjust to taste)
4. ½ tsp ground cinnamon
5. ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg (plus extra for serving)
6. ¼ tsp ground cardamom or ginger (optional)
7. 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
8. Pinch of salt

Directions:

1. Soak the cashews. Place the raw cashews in a heatproof bowl, cover them with boiling hot water, and let them sit for 15 minutes. Drain well.
2. Blend until smooth: Add the drained cashews, oat milk, maple syrup, cinnamon, grated nutmeg, cardamom or ginger, vanilla extract, and salt to a high-powered blender. Blend on high speed for 1 to 2 minutes until completely smooth, creamy and frothy.
3. Chill and thicken; Pour the mixture into a jar or pitcher. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours so the flavors meld and the texture thickens.
4. Serve: Shake or stir well before pouring into glasses. Top with a fresh dusting of grated nutmeg.