



## Tips for Preparing and Storing Your Turkey

### Q: How much turkey should I buy?

A: When purchasing a whole turkey, we would suggest the following pounds per number of guests:

- *Whole Turkey Buying Guide*
  - 2 to 4 guests— 8 to 12 pounds
  - 5 to 7 guests — 12 to 16 pounds
  - 8 to 10 guests — 16 to 20 pounds
  - 11 to 13 guests — 20 to 24 pounds

### Q: How should I thaw my frozen turkey and for how long?

A: There are two methods to thaw a frozen turkey:

- *Refrigerator Thawing*
  1. Plan ahead: allow approximately 24 hours for each 4 to 5 pounds in a refrigerator set at 40° F or below.
  2. Place the turkey in a container to prevent the juices from dripping on other foods.

#### *Whole Turkey Refrigerator Thawing Times*

- 4 to 12 pounds — 1 to 3 days
- 12 to 16 pounds — 3 to 4 days
- 16 to 20 pounds — 4 to 5 days
- 20 to 24 pounds — 5 to 6 days

- *Cold Water Thawing*
  1. First, be sure the turkey is in a leak-proof plastic bag to prevent cross-contamination and to prevent the turkey from absorbing water, resulting in a watery product.
  2. Submerge the wrapped turkey in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed. Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed.

#### *Whole Turkey Cold Water Thawing Times*

- 4 to 12 pounds — 2 to 6 hours
- 12 to 16 pounds — 6 to 8 hours
- 16 to 20 pounds — 8 to 10 hours
- 20 to 24 pounds — 10 to 12 hours

- A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1 or 2 days before cooking. Foods thawed in the refrigerator can be refrozen without cooking, but there may be some loss of quality.
- A turkey thawed by the cold-water method should be cooked immediately. After cooking, meat from the turkey can be refrozen.

### Q: Do I need to wash my turkey?

A: No. It is not necessary to wash your turkey; it has already been washed thoroughly.

### Q: What color should the skin be on a raw turkey?

A: Color ranges from off-white to cream colored. Under the skin, color can vary from pink to lavender-blue, depending on the amount of subcutaneous fat.

### Q: What type of cutting board do you recommend?

A: Plastic or glass surfaces are best for cutting raw meat and poultry. Wooden cutting boards are acceptable as long as they're used exclusively for raw meat and poultry.

- Cross-contamination during preparation, grilling and serving is a major cause of food-borne illness. Make sure you use a different board for cutting cooked food or other food items.



**Q: What's the best way to clean a cutting board?**

A: Glass, wooden and plastic cutting boards can be washed in hot, soapy water or put in the dishwasher.

**Q: Can I cook a turkey with the hock lock used to keep the turkey legs in place?**

A: Yes, it is safe to roast a turkey with the hock lock on. The hock lock can easily be removed after roasting by sliding off the turkey legs. Prior to roasting, it can be removed with kitchen shears. If you are deep frying the turkey, you should remove it.

**Q: How can I guard against salmonella?**

A: Following three simple rules will go a long way toward keeping your family safe.

- First, raw poultry should always be refrigerated at or below 40° F.
- Second, it should be cooked properly to internal temperatures of at least 165° F, as determined by a meat thermometer.
- Third, all counters, utensils and surfaces that come in contact with the raw turkey and its juices should be washed with hot, soapy water.

**Q: Our turkey is done, but we're not planning to eat it for a while. What should we do?**

A: *Eating Within 2 hours?*

- Keep the food hot. Keeping food warm is not enough. Harmful bacteria multiply fastest between 40 and 140° F.
- Set oven temperature high enough to keep the turkey at 140° F or above. Use a food thermometer to check. Stuffing and side dishes must also stay hot (at 140° F or above). Covering with foil will help keep the food moist.

*Eating Much Later?*

- It's not a good idea to keep food hot longer than two hours. It is better if you:
  - Remove all stuffing from the turkey cavity immediately and refrigerate it.
  - Cut turkey into smaller pieces and refrigerate. Slice breast meat; legs and wings may be left whole.
  - Refrigerate potatoes, gravy and vegetables in shallow containers.

**Q: How long can a turkey be left out after it has been cooked before it needs to go in the refrigerator?**

A: According to the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA, all leftovers should be stored in shallow containers and refrigerated or frozen within two hours of cooking.

- Bacteria grow rapidly between the temperatures of 40° F and 140° F. After food is safely cooked, hot food must be kept hot at 140° F or warmer to prevent bacterial growth.
- Throw away all perishable foods that have been left in room temperature for more than two hours (one hour if the temperature is over 90° F, such as at an outdoor picnic during summer).

**Q: How should I store turkey leftovers and side dishes in the refrigerator and for how long?**

A: Remove cooked turkey from the carcass. Store all leftovers in shallow dishes in the refrigerator. Leftovers should be eaten three to four days after they have been cooked.

For more turkey preparation and storage tips, visit [www.honeysucklewhite.com/faq/#](http://www.honeysucklewhite.com/faq/#).