



Q. What's the best way to thaw a frozen turkey and how long will it take?

A. The USDA recommends three ways to defrost turkeys: in the refrigerator, in cold water and in the microwave. Foods should never be thawed on the counter, or defrosted in hot water.

The safest method is in the refrigerator. Plan one day in the fridge for every 4 to 5 pounds of whole turkey. A fully thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days.

Cold water thawing is faster than refrigerator thawing but requires more attention. For cold water thawing, submerge the turkey in its airtight packaging in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes. For whole turkeys, estimate about 30 minutes per pound. Cook the turkey immediately after thawing. Consult your microwave manual for directions and times for thawing turkeys in the microwave. Turkey should be cooked immediately after thawing because parts of the turkey may begin to cook during microwaving. Always use your thermometer when cooking a turkey and cook the bird to 165 degrees F. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. All turkey meat, including any that remains pink, is safe to eat as soon as all parts reach at least 165 °F. The stuffing should reach 165 °F, whether cooked inside the bird or in a separate dish.

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