

TOP CHRISTMAS TURKEY TIPS AND ADVICE

Handling and storing

- Plan a realistic amount of food that you can cope with. If you have so much perishable food that it won't fit in the fridge, you might compromise its safety by storing it somewhere that isn't cold enough
- Buy a turkey that's realistic for your needs - the bigger the turkey the more difficult it is to prepare and cook safely
- Make sure the turkey is properly defrosted before you cook it. When it's completely thawed there won't be any ice crystals inside the cavity. You can also test it with a fork where the thickest part of the meat is, to tell whether the meat feels frozen
- Store raw meat at the bottom of the fridge in a covered container where it can't drip onto other foods. Always keep raw poultry away from ready-to-eat foods
- Wash hands, chopping boards, utensils and work surfaces with warm water and soap after they have been in contact with raw meat. Use a separate chopping board for raw meat
- Never wash your turkey (or other poultry) - washing can splash harmful bacteria onto worktops, dishes and other foods. Proper cooking will kill any bacteria so you have no need to wash poultry
- Always check that the meat is properly cooked through before you serve it. Make sure that the meat is piping hot all the way through. Cut into the thickest part and check that none of the meat is pink and if juices run out when you pierce the turkey they should be clear
- Don't leave food out all day. Better to put out small amounts at a time, so that what has been on the table has just been cooked or just come out of the fridge. Try to use any leftovers ideally within 48 hours or freeze them

So what is the best way to defrost a turkey?

The best and safest method to defrost your turkey is in the fridge, allowing 10–12 hours per Kilo. If you can't fit your turkey in the fridge, defrost it at room temperature (allowing 2 hours per Kilo) taking care to make sure it is covered and does not touch any other foods.

Always make sure that the turkey is thoroughly defrosted before putting it in the oven. Now you've got the turkey defrosted, follow the attached guide to basic timings for cooking and advice on handling your turkey

Cooking

- It's very important to plan your cooking time in advance to make sure you get the turkey in the oven early enough to cook it thoroughly. A large turkey can take several hours to cook properly
- Often cooking advice is included on the turkey's packaging, or you can look in your oven handbook, or in a cookery book
- As a general guide, for a turkey under 4.5kg allow 45 minutes per kg plus 20 minutes; for one weighing between 4.5kg and 6.5kg 40 minutes per kg; and for those over 6.5kg 35 minutes per kg at 180°C, 350°F, Gas Mark 4 (after the oven has preheated). These times are for an unstuffed bird
- It is safer to cook stuffing separately in a roasting tin, but if you decide to cook your turkey with the stuffing inside, allow extra time for the amount of stuffing and for the fact that the bird cooks more slowly.
- Remember, some ovens, such as fan assisted ovens, might cook the turkey more quickly, so always check the manufacturer's handbook for your oven