

# Stress-Free Roast Turkey



**TIP:** The 3 keys to easy, stress-free turkey roasting are:

1. Using an **ovenproof meat thermometer** to ensure safe cooking doneness. They're inexpensive and very easy to use. (A butcher I know recommended this to me years ago. I listened, obeyed, and haven't looked back since.)

2. Roast the turkey *breast side down* at HIGH oven heat (450°F/230°C) for the first 30 minutes, turn the oven heat down to 325°F (165°C) and leave the turkey *breast side down*, and then turn the turkey *breast side up* for the last 50 minutes of cooking. This method allows the fat in the turkey legs and thighs to baste the bird naturally and preserve the moisture and tenderness of the low-fat breast meat.

3. *NOT* roasting the turkey filled with stuffing. Roasting a stuffed turkey only adds more cooking time and causes the meat to dry out.

**Fridge to Finish Time:** Plan about 4 1/2 - 5 hours to prepare a 12-15 pound turkey as follows: 1/2 and hour to prepare the turkey for roasting, about 2 - 2 1/2 hours to roast at 10 minutes per pound (*using the combination of HIGH and MEDIUM oven heat method shown here*), and at least 30 minutes after roasting to let the turkey rest before carving.

## **Ingredients**

**Turkey**  
**Cooking Spray**  
**Garlic Powder**  
**Paprika**  
**Herbs de Provence or Italian Seasoning**



## **HOW TO THAW A FROZEN TURKEY**

*I do not recommend using a microwave oven to thaw a frozen turkey, even though that method is sometimes suggested on the turkey packaging label, because using the microwave oven will begin the cooking process and will therefore have a toughening effect on the*

finished cooked turkey meat. Instead, I recommend the following two methods: one that's most hands-free but requires more time and another that's quicker but requires a little more attention.

**MOST HANDS-FREE METHOD TO THAW A FROZEN TURKEY:** Leave the **frozen turkey** in its original packaging, put it on a plate or in a bowl to contain condensation, and let the **turkey** thaw slowly in the refrigerator. The only drawback with this method is time. Plan on 2-3 days thawing time for a **12-15 pound turkey**.





**QUICKEST METHOD TO THAW A FROZEN TURKEY:** Leave the **turkey** in its original packaging, put it in a big bowl or pot, and fill the pot with cool tap water. Change the water and turn the **turkey** over every half hour to hour or so, and plan on 30 minutes thawing time per pound - about 6 hours total thawing time for a **12 pound turkey**, 7 1/2 hours for a **15 pound turkey**.



### **Equipment**

Measuring Cup

Paper Towels

Potholders or Folded Dish Towels

Roasting Pan

Roasting Rack (optional - keeps the turkey out of the fat as it cooks)

Large Fork

Sharp Knife

Large Sturdy Spatula (I'm using a long-handled grill spatula, which works great for this)

Large Cutting Board

Ovenproof Meat Thermometer

Timer



1. Note the **weight of the turkey** on the packaging label, and calculate the total cooking time in minutes by multiplying the **weight of the turkey** in pounds by 10 minutes per

pound. (The turkey photographed in this recipe weighed 17.43 pounds. I discounted the .43 pounds and multiplied 17 pounds by 10 minutes for a total cooking time, *using the roasting method shown here*, of 170 minutes, or 2 hours and 50 minutes.)



2. Take the **turkey** out of its packaging in the sink.



Remove the **giblet bag** and **turkey neck**, stored individually or separately in either or both the **hind** or **neck cavity**, and...



...use a sharp knife to cut away **excess skin** at the **top of the turkey's neck**, *if necessary* (the skin piece isn't always that big that it needs to be cut back).





### 3. Rinse the **outside of the turkey** and...



...both the **neck** and **hind cavities** with cool tap water, and...



...pat the **turkey** dry with paper towels.



4. Set an oven rack in the lower third of the oven, and preheat the oven to 450°F (230°C).



5. Put a roasting rack (optional) in a roasting pan, and spray both the rack and pan with **a light, even coat of cooking spray**. I

recommend using **cooking spray** even if either or both the rack and pan are Teflon coated to make cleanup later as easy as possible.



6. Stand the **turkey** in the roasting pan, and add a **good shake of the following ingredients** to *BOTH* the **neck** and **hind cavities**:

**garlic powder**





## **Herbs de Provence or Italian seasoning**



## **paprika**



7. Sprinkle **garlic powder, Herbs de Provence or Italian Seasoning, and paprika** first on the **breast side** and then...





...on the **bottom** of the turkey.



7. When the oven has warmed to 450°F (230°C), put the **turkey** in the oven, and set a timer for 30 minutes.



8. When the timer sounds, turn down the oven heat to 325°F (165°C), leave the **turkey breast-side down**, and set a timer for the total number of cooking minutes (170 minutes for the 17.43 pound turkey shown here) minus 80 minutes (30 minutes from step 7 and 50 minutes from step 11). For the 17.43 pound turkey shown here, the cooking time for this step is 90 minutes (or 1 hour and 30 minutes as shown below).



9. When the timer sounds, CAREFULLY use potholders or folded dish towels to remove the **breast-side down turkey** from the oven.

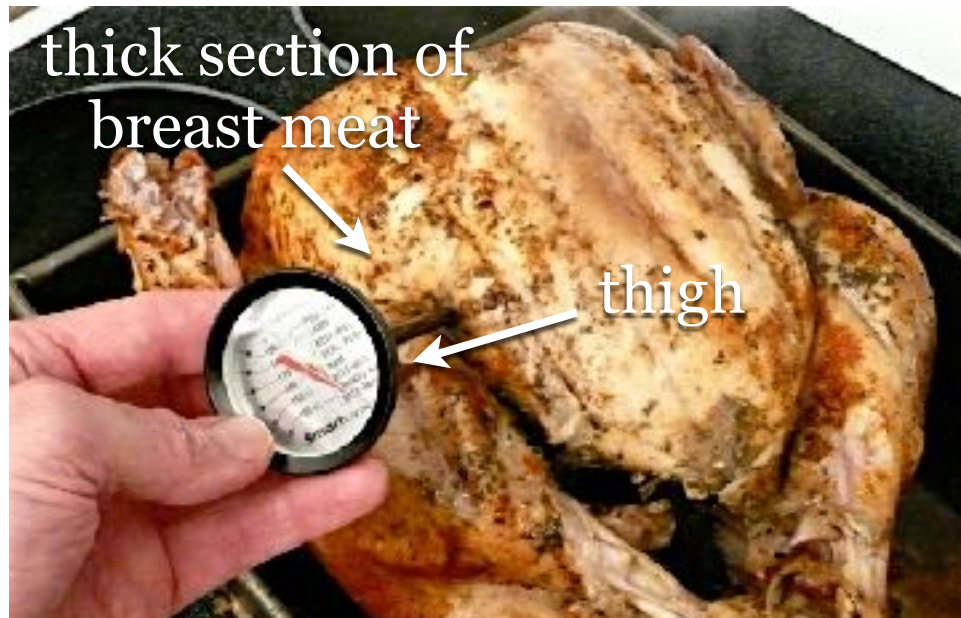


Then CAREFULLY use a large fork and sturdy spatula to lift and turn the **turkey breast-side up**. (The roasting rack marks imprinted on the turkey breast in the third photo below will fade during the 50 minutes of **breast-side up cooking**.)





10. Insert an **ovenproof meat thermometer** into the **thick section of breast meat** next to the **thigh muscle** *WITHOUT* touching any **bone** so that the **thermometer** is set in the **turkey**...



...about like this.





11. Put the **turkey** back in the oven, and set a timer for 50 minutes.



12. When the timer sounds, **CAREFULLY** remove the **turkey** from the oven with potholders or folded dish towels, and...



...check it for doneness. **Turkey meat** is safely cooked when it has reached an internal

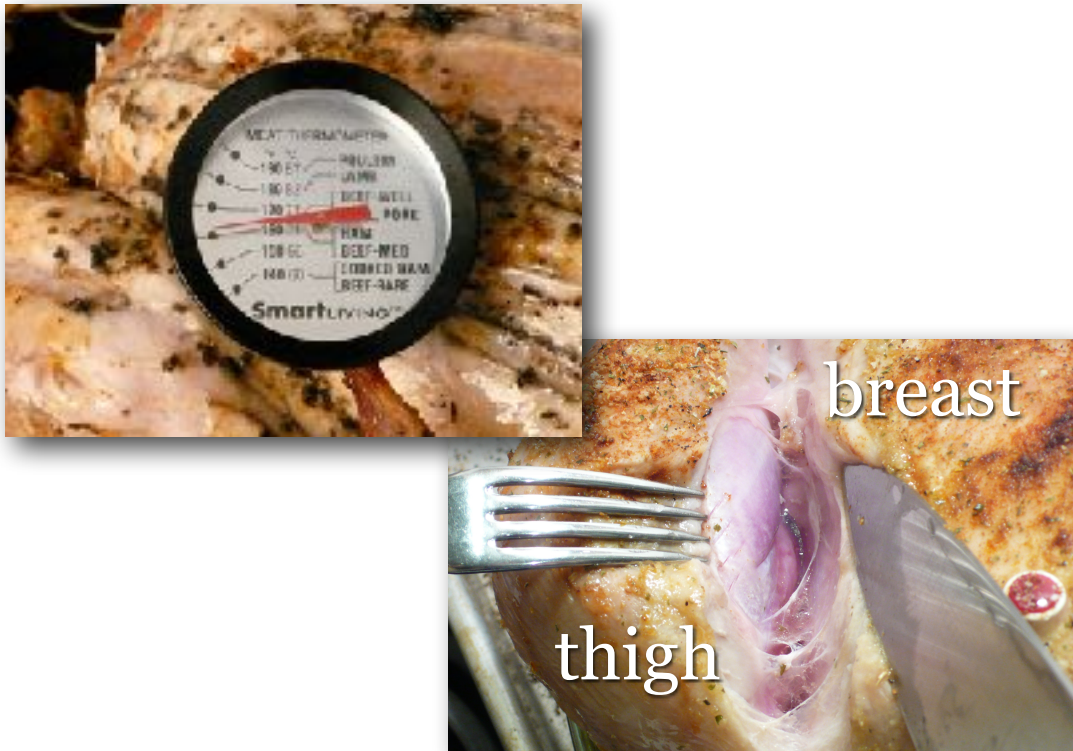
temperature of at least 180 degrees and the **breast meat** is white and **leg meat** is grey throughout *with no runny red liquid*, which you can see by making a **cut in the turkey** where the **thigh** and **breast** join as shown in the bottom right picture below. (Compare these two pictures with the two **Unsafely Cooked Turkey** pictures that follow.)



## Safely Cooked Turkey

If, however, the temperature on your **meat thermometer** (if you're using one) is less than 180 degrees or any of the **meat** is still *red or pink with red runny liquid* when you cut into the **turkey** where the **thigh** meets the

**breast**, as shown in the bottom right picture, keep cooking the **turkey** until the **meat** looks as shown in the **Safely Cooked Turkey** pictures above.



## Unsafely Cooked Turkey

13. When the **turkey** is safely cooked, transfer it from the roasting pan to a cutting board, and let the **turkey** rest for at least 30 minutes both to let the **meat juices** inside settle and make the **turkey** safer to handle before carving.





## HOW TO CARVE A TURKEY

14. After the **turkey** has rested for at least 30 minutes, start carving by making a long cut through the **breast** just inside and parallel to the **breast bone**.





Make a second cut down and parallel to the **outside edge of the neck cavity**.



Cut and pull the **meat** away from the **ribs**, and...



...remove the **breast meat** from the **body** with a full-length cut made parallel to the **wing**

and inside the **thigh** where the **leg** meets the **breast**.



Slice the **breast meat** into **cross section** pieces **1/2 - 3/4 inch wide**.

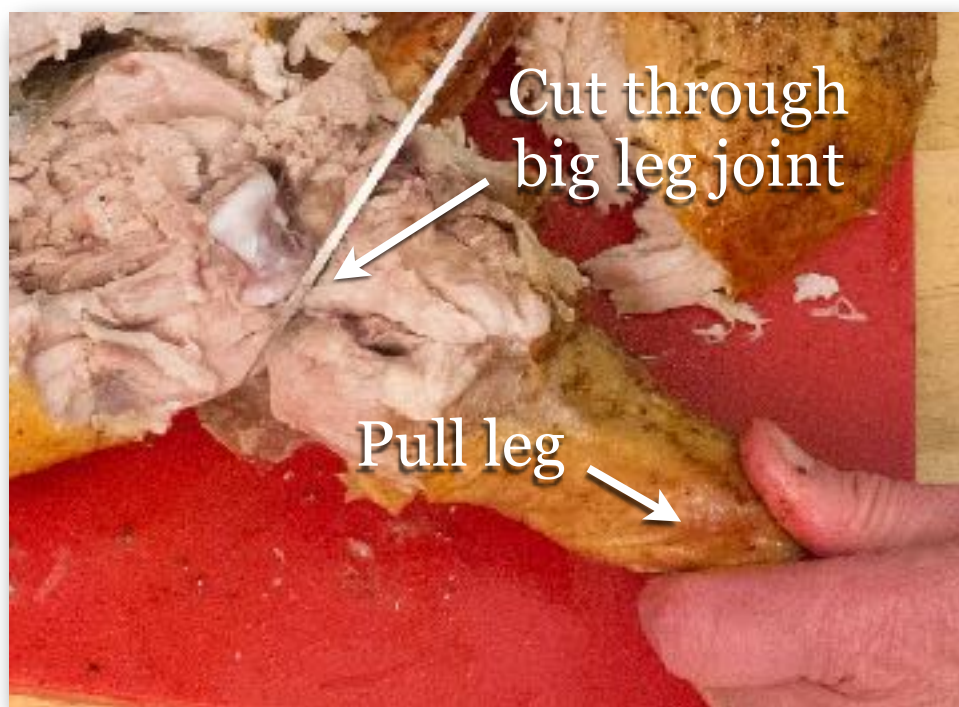


15. Remove the **leg tie** (usually made of plastic, if your turkey came with one), and...





...pull and cut the **leg** away from the **body** at the **big leg joint**.



16. Pull the **wing** and cut it away from the **body** at the **big wing joint** shown below and...



**...serve warm!**





## MAKING CLEANUP AS EASY AS POSSIBLE

17. When the roasting pan is safely cool enough to touch, pour all the **drippings** from the pan into a measuring cup to reserve for **gravy**.



18. Use a wad of paper towels to remove as much **fat** as possible from the pan.



Add warm water and a squirt of dish soap to the pan and roasting rack, and let both soak for at least 10-20 minutes.



After soaking, scrub the roasting rack and pan with a dish brush or sponge and...



...rinse clean.



## STORING LEFTOVER TURKEY

19. Remove as much **meat** from the **turkey body** as possible (the photos below specifically show how to remove the meat from the top of the neck cavity to uncover the **wishbone**, or turkey collarbone) until...



...the **turkey skeleton** looks about like this.





Put the **turkey meat** in a sturdy plastic bag.



Squeeze as much air from the bag as possible, especially if you're planning to freeze the **meat**, and seal the bag closed.



Store the **meat** either in the refrigerator for up to 1 week, or...



...in the freezer for at least 1 month.



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