



Yes, you can roast a frozen turkey

Can you cook a frozen turkey? Last year, a family friend did and said it turned out fine.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service — the folks that bring you the Meat and Poultry Hotline — yes, you can safely roast a turkey even if it's not thawed. It takes longer, obviously — at least 50 percent longer. But some people swear by the method.

In 2005, O. Peter Snyder, Jr., a food scientist and the president of a Minnesota consulting company for the hospitality industry, put together guidelines for roasting frozen turkey. A two-page PDF file is available at <http://www.hi-tm.com/Documents2005/turkey-cook-frozen.pdf>.

Snyder says roasting frozen turkeys offers several benefits. First, you don't have to worry about bacteria in a thawed turkey's raw juices contaminating the kitchen as you handle the turkey before cooking. Second, roasting a frozen turkey allows the dark meat (leg and thigh) to reach a well-done 175 to 185 degrees F while the breast meat (which takes longer to thaw) reaches a tender-but-done 165 degrees F. This prevents the common problem of the white meat drying out while you're waiting for the dark meat to cook until done.

Still, there are a few tricks. For example, during the cooking, you have to remove the package of giblets as soon as the turkey thaws enough to allow you to do so. Sometimes they're wrapped in plastic — if so, the FSIS

warns that you must remove them before the plastic melts (or is otherwise altered by the heat) to prevent harmful chemicals from leaching into the surrounding meat. Also, don't use a cooking bag when roasting a frozen turkey — it's not safe to open a hot cooking bag when you remove the giblets.

Plus, the recommended roasting time (1.5 times the length recommended for a thawed bird) is approximate. Use a meat thermometer to make sure all parts of the turkey are cooked at least to a safe 165 degrees F.

For more details, see the FSIS Web site (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>) and search for "Turkey: Alternate Routes to the Table."

If you decide instead to take the traditional route, remember:

- Thaw the turkey in the refrigerator. Allow 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds — that's five to six days for a large 20- to 24-pound bird. Put it on a tray to catch any juices. Never leave a raw turkey at room temperature to thaw — doing so allows bacteria to multiply to dangerous levels.

- Don't rinse off a thawed turkey. Doing so splatters raw juices around the sink area, potentially contaminating the surrounding countertop and other foods.

For more cooking and safety tips, see the FSIS Web site and search for "Let's Talk Turkey."

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For the week of
November 16, 2008

By Martha Filipic

(614) 292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Lydia Medeiros, food safety specialist with Ohio State University Extension, researcher with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, and professor in the Department of Human Nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

To receive Chow Line by e-mail, send a message to filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu or sign up at <http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/subscribe.php>.

Section of Communications and Technology

News and Media Relations

2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension
TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868