

Pastured Turkey Cooking Tips

1. Thank you VERY much for supporting us and purchasing your turkey from a small, sustainable family farm! That said, please remember that pasture-raised turkeys are not like factory-farmed birds. Outside of conscientious animal husbandry, it is very difficult for us to control the size of our Thanksgiving turkeys. Please be forgiving if the bird we have for you is a little larger or a little smaller than you anticipated. Cook a few extra vegetables if it is too small, enjoy the leftovers if it is too large. If the bird is so large that it cannot fit in your oven, simply remove the legs before roasting it.
2. Somewhere, a lot of folks came to believe that turkeys needed to be roasted until they had an internal temperature of 180 degrees Fahrenheit. **Yuck.** You don't need to do that. Your turkey need only be cooked to 165 degrees. If the breast is done and the thighs are not, take the bird out of the oven, carve off the legs and thighs, and put them back in to cook while you carve the breast. That entire holiday myth about coming to the table with a perfect whole bird and then engaging in exposition carving is about as realistic as expecting our daughters will grow up to look like Barbie (and who'd want that, anyhow?). Just have fun and enjoy good food and good fellowship.
3. We used to ascribe to that crazy method where you start roasting your bird upside down, then flip it over to brown the breast. The idea was that the bird would cook more evenly, and the breast wouldn't dry out. Once when I did this, the turkey came out fine. But I suffered 2nd degree burns, threw out my back, ruined two sets of potholders and nearly dropped the thing on the floor. Pasture-raised turkeys are naturally juicy. Don't make yourself crazy with this stunt. Just put it in the oven breast-side up like you would a whole chicken, and don't over-cook it. Take it out when the breast is 165 degrees (see #2, above).
4. Pasture-raised turkeys will cook faster than factory-farmed birds. Figure on 12-15 minutes per pound at 325 degrees as you plan your dinner. That said, oven temperatures and individual birds will always vary. Use an internal meat thermometer to know for sure when the bird is cooked.
5. If you plan to make soup from your turkey leftovers, be sure to remove all the meat from the bones before you boil the carcass for stock. Add the chunks of turkey back to the broth just before serving the soup. This prevents the meat from getting rubbery and stringy. For an extra-nutritious stock, follow the advice in Nourishing Traditions and add a tablespoon of vinegar to the water 30 minutes before you begin boiling the carcass. This will draw more minerals from the bones.

Adapted from Shannon Hayes, author of *The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook*



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