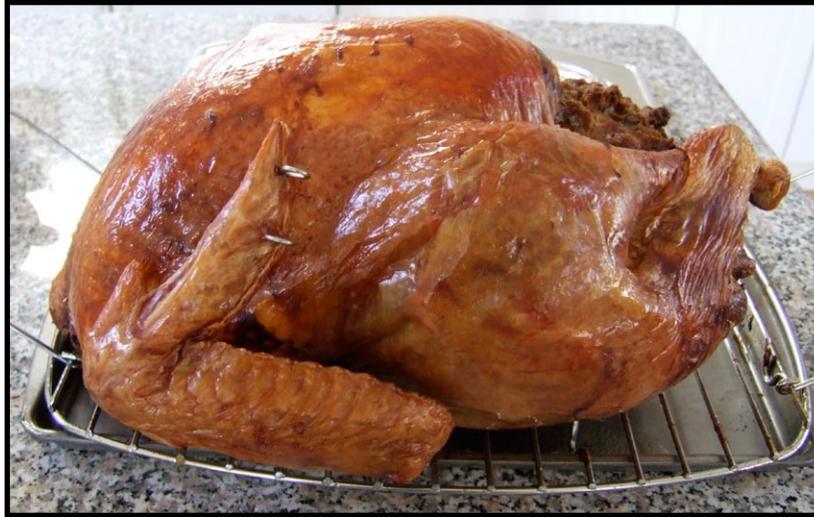


BEST BIRD EVER



You, too, can have a turkey looking this photogenic for the holidays. Just remember the Three Ts of Turkey. (Thaw properly, use a Thermometer and mind the Two-hour Rule. (Which does not refer to how long you roast it.)

By CHANDRA ORR
Creators News Service

Can I cook it in a convection oven? What if my power goes out? What do I do with the giblets?

No need to get your feathers in a bunch. The Butterball Turkey Talk-Line experts have answered a lot of questions in the past 28 years. In fact, the phone line (1 -800-BUTTERBALL) receives 100,000 queries each year.

Specialists field questions on everything from how to transport a turkey cross-country to what to do when the dog eats a part of the bird before it hits the oven.

“There is a lot that can happen that people don’t plan for,” Mary Clingman, director of the Butterball Turkey Talk-Line, said. “Thanksgiving is absolutely the most popular holiday meal of the year - and people want a picture-perfect turkey.”

While many of the questions stay the same year to year, questions about proper thawing techniques and cooking methods are high on the list. Clingman has seen plenty of turkey trends come and go, from Thanksgiving meals made entirely in the microwave to deep frying whole birds.

“Turkey is such a simple thing to cook, yet it’s amazing how much detail we can go into,” Clingman said.

Whether you’re cooking in a convection oven or on the campfire, the Butterball turkey experts can help. But classic oven roasting is still the best way to get the best tasting bird.

When advising callers, operators rely on the “Three T’s of Turkey” - thawing, thermometers and the two-hour rule.

THAW PROPERLY

Turkey is perishable, so proper food safety is essential. You don’t want your guests going home sick. Turkey must be kept cold when thawing. Never leave your turkey sitting on the counter at room temperature. Instead, keep it in the refrigerator or in a cold water bath.

USE A THERMOMETER

“Turkeys are very young and tender. They don’t need to be overcooked,” Clingman said. “Use a meat thermometer. Cook the turkey just until it’s done, then get it out of the oven.”

Cook turkey in a 325-degree oven in an open pan. The sides of the pan should be no more than 2 inches high to allow for uniform cooking. A pan that is too high will lead to overdone breast meat.

For optimal safety, place a meat thermometer in the center of the stuffing and cook to 165 degrees. Cook breast meat to 170 degrees and thigh meat to 180 degrees. “Two-thirds of the way through cooking, make a foil tent over the breast meat,” Clingman said. “The breast meat won’t get overcooked, but the thigh meat will be done. That’s one of the neat little pearls of advice that we offer callers.”

MIND THE TWO-HOUR RULE

Let the turkey stand for 15 to 20 minutes before carving, then serve immediately. Once the bird is out of the oven, you’ve got just two hours to get the leftovers in the fridge to maintain food safety.

Want more advice? Visit Butterball.com for cooking tips, recipes and helpful meal-planning tools like the Butterball Turkey and Stuffing Calculator. Enter the number of guests to find out how much stuffing and turkey you’ll need.