



Turkey Talk: Thawing

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Holidays are often about the special meals we eat and the cherished memories we will create. When preparing your holiday meal, there are some things to keep in mind to ensure that the food you are serving is safe to eat. Many times, turkey is the protein of choice for the winter/fall holidays. Below is some information from the USDA to keep in mind when preparing to thaw your turkey.

Never thaw your turkey on the counter. This unsafe method to defrost, allows the raw meat to reach the temperature danger zone (40° F - 140° F) for a long period of time. This allows bacteria to multiply quickly which increases the chances of getting food poisoning. Instead, use one of the following *safe* thawing method options:

Refrigerator: place the turkey in a pan that has raised sides (to prevent leaking and making a mess in your refrigerator). Make sure your refrigerator is set to be 40° F or colder. Once thawed, the turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1-2 days before cooking. The USDA has a great reference guide for how long it will take to thaw your turkey in the refrigerator:

4 to 12 pounds	1 to 3 days
12 to 16 pounds	3 to 4 days
16 to 20 pounds	4 to 5 days
20 to 24 pounds	5 to 6 days

Cold water: put your turkey in a leak proof bag (to prevent germs from getting all over your sink & the bird getting over watered). Then submerge the wrapped turkey in cold water. The water needs to be changed every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed to make sure the bird doesn't get into the temperature danger zone. Here is a USDA chart for estimating the time needed to thaw the turkey with this method. Once the turkey is thawed, it needs to be cooked immediately.

4 to 12 pounds	2-6 hours
12 to 16 pounds	6-8 hours
16 to 20 pounds	8-10 hours
20 to 24 pounds	10-12 hours

Microwave: when using this method to thaw, make sure to follow the specific microwave manufacturer's instructions to ensure proper thawing. Once the turkey is thawed, it should be cooked right away because this method of thawing actually starts to cook the bird in some areas. It is unsafe to store partially cooked food.

Source:

USDA Turkey Basics: Safe Thawing: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/poultry/turkey-basics-safe-thawing>