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- Archives of past issues can be found [here](#).
- Email announcements of official UF | IFAS poultry programs to [baker@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:baker@ifas.ufl.edu)
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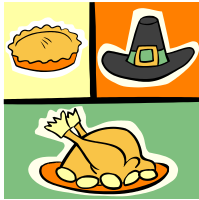
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# Feathered Facts

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UF/IFAS Extension Baker County

## Safe Cooking During the Holidays



With the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays just around the corner, many families will be cooking large feasts for celebration. It is important to remember that all meats, including poultry, have a certain temperature that must be reached during the cooking process to destroy potential pathogens that may reside on or in the meat.

While this issue of *Feathered Facts* will focus on poultry meats, the list to the right covers the safe internal temperature that should be reached for meats to consider them safe. The list is adapted from the [Foodsafety.gov](http://Foodsafety.gov) website. Specific information about Safe Minimum Cooking Temperatures can be found [here](#).

Category	Temperature (°F)
Ground Meat & Meat Mixtures	165 (Poultry)
	160 (Others)
Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb	145
Poultry	165
Pork & Ham	145 (Fresh)
	140 (Precooked)
Eggs & Egg Dishes	Firm yolk & white 160
Leftovers & Casseroles	165

## Choosing Your Holiday Turkey

Turkey meat has become more popular as a year-round product as luncheon meat and in other areas, but many families in the U.S. still prefer a whole turkey as their holiday meat. Choosing the right turkey for your family can be easy if you follow a few simple guidelines.

### Fresh Turkeys

- Allow 1 lb. of meat per person
- Buy your turkey only 1 to 2 days before you plan to cook it
- Store fresh turkey in a refrigerated area until ready to cook.
- Do not buy fresh, prestuffed turkeys.

### Frozen Turkeys

- Allow 1 lb. of meat per person
- Keep frozen until ready to thaw.
- Turkeys can be kept frozen indefinitely, but for best quality, cook within 1 year.
- Only purchase frozen, prestuffed turkeys that display the USDA or State mark of inspection.
- Do not thaw frozen, prestuffed turkeys before cooking. Cook from a frozen state.





Official Seal of the U.S. National Organic Program. For additional information about the National Organic Program, please click [here](#).

Products that are not certified as organic cannot claim to be organic on the principal display panel or use the USDA organic seal.

Never thaw frozen meat at room temperature. This can lead to potential bacterial growth.

## Thawing Your Turkey

There are only 3 ways to thaw your turkey (Or any frozen meat) safely: 1) in the refrigerator, 2) in cold water, or 3) in the microwave oven. The size of your turkey will determine the amount of time that it will take to thaw (and if it will fit in a microwave), with larger birds taking the longest time no matter the thawing method. The following guidelines will help you to determine the amount of time that it will take to thaw your holiday bird.

### In the Refrigerator

Generally, you will want to allow 24 hours of thawing time for each 4 to 5 pounds of turkey. This means that a 4 lb. turkey should take about one (1) day to thaw in the refrigerator. A bird that weighs 16 pounds will take about four (4) days to thaw. A turkey that has been thawed in the refrigerator can be refrozen.

### In Cold Water

For cold water thawing, you should estimate that it will take about thirty (30) minutes for each pound of turkey. During this process, you should change the thawing water every thirty (30) minutes. Turkeys that have been thawed in this manner should not be refrozen.

### In the Microwave

Please check your owner’s manual for specifications on thawing a turkey in the microwave. Microwave ovens can vary in their power output and the manufacturer’s recommendations should be followed. Do not refrigerate or refreeze a turkey that has been thawed in this manner. It should be cooked immediately.

<i>Time recommendations for thawing turkey in the refrigerator</i>	4 to 12 lbs.	1 to 3 days
	12 to 16 lbs.	3 to 4 days
	16 to 20 lbs.	4 to 5 days
	20 to 24 lbs.	5 to 6 days

## Ask the Expert

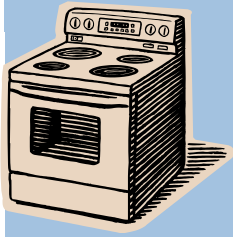
This month’s question relates to poultry meat: **Why do chickens and turkeys have light and dark meat?**

Muscles are used at varying rates. Those muscles that are used more require sufficient oxygen to perform. Myoglobin (similar to hemoglobin) is an oxygen binding protein that is found in the muscles that are used more often. The myoglobin helps to store oxygen for intense periods of use. This is why flightless birds such as chickens and turkeys have dark meat in the leg muscles (the ones they use the most) and light meat in the breast and wings. Other fowl, such as ducks, have dark muscle in the breast.

If you have a question for the expert, email it to [baker@ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:baker@ifas.ufl.edu).



## Cooking Your Turkey



There are many methods that are used for cooking a whole turkey. Roasting in the oven is one of the more popular methods,

along with grilling, smoking, and frying. The guidelines listed below will help to make sure that your turkey is cooked properly. Proper cooking is essential in reducing the probability of foodborne illness.

### ROASTING

- Do not set the oven temperature below 325°F
- For increased safety, it is not recommended to stuff the turkey as the stuffing may not reach the correct temperature. For best results, cook the stuffing separately in a casserole.
- Whole turkeys are safe when cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F. Check this with a meat thermometer at the innermost part of the thigh and wing along with the thickest part of the breast. Do not rely solely on the pop-up indicator for temperature confirmation.

### GRILLING

- Turkeys that are grilled should be cooked 15 to 18 minutes per pound.
- Do not stuff turkeys that are to be grilled (for the same reason as above).
- The air temperature in the grill must stay between 225°F and 300°F for the previous listed times to be effective.
- Cook to an internal temperature of 165°F.

### Smoking

- Turkeys that are smoked should be cooked for 20 to 30 minutes per pound.
- Do not stuff turkeys that are to be smoked.
- Air temperature in the smoker must stay between 225°F and 300°F for the previous listed times to be effective.
- Cook to an internal temperature of 165°F.

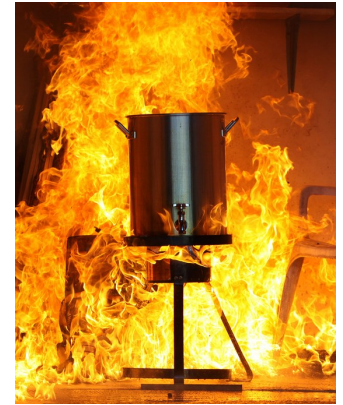
### DEEP FAT FRYING

- Turkeys that are fried should be cooked for 3 to 5 minutes per pound.
- Do not stuff turkeys that are to be fried.
- Oil in the cooker should maintain a temperature at or above 350°F.
- Cook to an internal temperature of 165°F.

### LEFTOVERS

- Discard any turkey, stuffing or gravy that is left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
- Refrigerated leftovers should be consumed or thrown out within 3 to 4 days.
- When you reheat your leftovers, make sure to reheat them to a temperature of 165°F.

For additional information on food safety and turkey, please click [here](#) and [here](#). Additional information on alternative methods of cooking turkey can be found [here](#).



A fire caused by the unsafe operation of a turkey fryer. For additional safety tips on turkey frying, click [here](#). To see a video on what NOT to do, please click [here](#).



It is often suggested that Ben Franklin endorsed the turkey to be the National Symbol of the United States. This is more myth than fact. For more information, please click [here](#).

## Meat and Poultry Labels

With few exceptions, meat and poultry products sold in the U.S. must meet specific quality and safety regulations that are administered by the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Part of this regulation includes labeling, which describes the way a meat or poultry product was raised or processed. When selecting meats, it is important to recognize some of the terms that are used on packaging labels and what they really mean. The list below contains some of the common labeling terms. For additional information, please click [here](#).

**Organic**—products that are labeled “Organic” must consist of at least 95% organically produced ingredients. This is exclusive of water and salt. Meat and poultry products that are labeled in this manner were reared without the regular use of antibiotics and without growth hormones (**NOTE: growth-promoting hormones are not allowed in the rearing of any hogs or poultry in the U.S., regardless of “organic” status; products that are not certified as “Organic” by the USDA certification process cannot claim to be organic on the principle display panel or use the USDA organic seal.**)

**100 Percent Organic (100% Organic)**—products that are labeled in this manner must contain only organically produced ingredients. This is exclusive of salt and water. Certification must also be obtained for this claim to be made.

**Made with Organic Ingredients**—Products with this label must contain at least 70% organic ingredients and may list up to three organic ingredients or food groups on the label.

**Chemical-Free**—This term is **NOT ALLOWED** to be used on meat and poultry labels.

**Free Range (Free Roaming)**—producers of products that are labeled in this manner must demonstrate that the poultry has been allowed access to the outdoors. This label does not mean that the animals were raised outside.

**Fresh Poultry**—raw poultry that is labeled as “fresh” has never had an internal temperature below 26°F.

**Natural**—products that are labeled as “natural” contain no artificial ingredients or added color and have to be minimally processed. This means that the raw product must remain fundamentally unaltered. The label must also explain the use of the term as it applies to the product, such as “No Artificial Ingredients or Added Colorings”. This term does not provide indication on how the animal was raised.

**No Hormones (pork or poultry)**—hormones are **NOT ALLOWED** in the rearing of hogs or poultry in the United States. Because of this, the label **CANNOT** contain claims such as “No Hormones Added” unless it is followed by a statement that says “Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones”.

**No Antibiotics**—the term “No Antibiotics Added” may be used on the label of products where the producers have supplied sufficient documentation to regulators indicating that the animals were raised without antibiotics.

**Kosher**—the term “Kosher” may only be used on the labels of meat and poultry products that were processed and prepared under rabbinical supervision.

**Halal or Zabiah Halal**—these terms may only be used on the labels of federally inspected products that are handled according to Islamic law and under Islamic authority.

**Young Turkey**—the use of this term on the label indicates that the turkey was processed when it was less than 8 months of age. The turkey can be of either sex. This label does not indicate how the animal was raised.



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