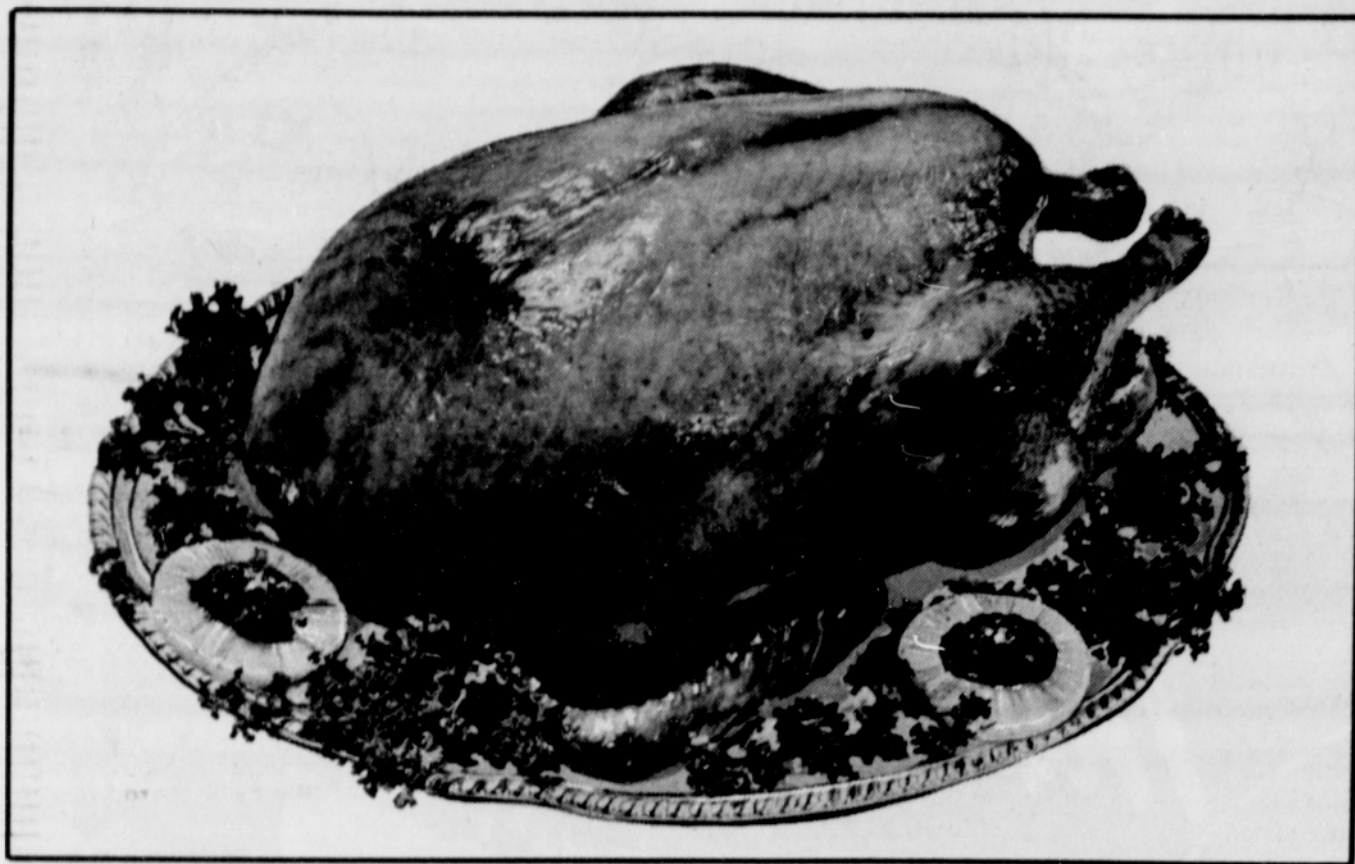


# FOOD SECTION

November 17, 1982  
Volume XIII, Number 6  
Section II



## Turkey Talk

**T**HE INDIANS weren't the only ones on hand to greet Columbus when he landed in the New World. The turkeys were there, too! In fact, fossil evidence shows that turkeys have roamed the Americas for ten million years.

The American wild turkey still exists, but bears little resemblance to the tender, broad-breasted bird consumers purchase today. Thanks to new methods of breeding, nutrition and packaging, today's turkey isn't even the same bird consumers enjoyed a mere 25 years ago.

Today's market turkey is a "mammoth" bird, weighing about three and one-half times as much as the wild turkeys the Pilgrims ate. Moreover, the "new" turkey consumes 30 percent less feed and requires more than one month less growing time to reach market age than turkeys of 20 years ago. As an added plus, today's turkeys have about 25 percent more meat than turkeys of the 1950s.

### Handling tips

Proper handling of all food products, including turkey, reduces any risk of food poisoning or foodborne illness. Three very simple rules to remember: 1) Keep food clean; 2) Keep cold food cold; 3) Keep hot food hot.

### Keep food clean

Begin with a good fresh food product and keep it clean. To avoid contamination, keep utensils, cutting boards, platters, hands and counter tops soap and water clean. Before preparing food, wash your hands thoroughly.

Wash everything thoroughly with soap and hot water after preparing any raw meats. This prevents bacteria from the raw product being transferred to other foods.

Use separate cutting boards for raw and cooked foods. Wooden cutting boards are sometimes a problem because microorganisms can get in between the fibers in the wood and may be transferred to other foods. Other materials such as plastic make safer cutting boards.

### Keep cold foods cold, hot foods hot

Hot means 140 degrees or higher—cold means 40 degrees or lower. The temperatures between are ideal for the growth of bacteria and the production of toxins in foods.

When purchasing turkey, make it one of the last items on your supermarket shopping list. Get it home and into the refrigerator or freezer quickly. Keeping foods cold inhibits bacterial growth and the production of toxins.

Accepted methods for thawing a turkey are: Leave turkey in refrigerator for 3 to 4 days (24 hours for each 5 pounds of turkey), or cover with cold water, changing water frequently (½ hour per pound of turkey). Cook turkey as soon as possible after thawing.

Do not stuff uncooked turkey and hold it in the refrigerator. If stuffing

is made in advance, store separately and stuff just before roasting.

When cooking stuffed turkey, make certain that the stuffing reaches a temperature of at least 165 degrees during roasting.

Do not partially cook turkey one day and complete the cooking the next day. Keep the turkey hot (above 140 degrees) until it is served. Remove all stuffing from leftover cooked turkey before cooling and storing in the refrigerator. Refrigerate food immediately after the meal. Foods may not be safe to eat if held for more than 2 or 3 hours at temperatures between 40 and 140 degrees. Package leftovers and refrigerate or freeze.

Heat leftovers thoroughly. Boil broth and gravies several minutes when reheating.

Heat frozen, cooked turkey without thawing or thaw in the refrigerator before using.

### Grilling instructions

Grilling instructions and cooking times are approximate. The cooking time will vary with the temperature of the coals and the distance the food is placed from the source of heat. For larger turkey parts, half and whole-bodied turkeys for example, a meat thermometer will remove much of the guesswork.

Basically, there are two grilling methods for turkey, direct and indirect heat. Direct heat cooking is used for smaller turkey parts, up to as large as a half breast. Indirect heat is used for grilling half-bodied and whole-bodied turkeys.

Here is a more detailed explanation of each method.

### Direct heat cooking

To prepare coals, spread single layer of charcoal over bottom of large outdoor grill. Stack in a pyramid; light and let burn to glowing coal stage, about 30 minutes.

Spread glowing coals evenly over bottom of grill. Place grate over coals. Add more coals as needed every 45 minutes during cooking to maintain heat.

Grill may be covered with a lid; venting as manufacturer directs, or with heavy-duty aluminum foil, piercing in several places to form vents.

Rinse turkey parts and pat dry. Brush with sweet sauce or glaze only during last 30 minutes of cooking to avoid over-browning. Cook according to the following instruction.

**Ground turkey burgers (3 oz. each):** Grill 7 to 10 minutes per side, turning once. Use covered or uncovered grill.

**Turkey franks:** Brown on all sides, turning as needed. Use covered or uncovered grill.

**Turkey wings (¼ to 1 lb. each):** Leave wings whole or separate into two parts. Grill 25 minutes per side. Use covered or uncovered grill.

**Turkey thighs (½ to 1½ lbs. each):** Grill 30 to 45 minutes per side, turning once. Use covered or uncovered grill.

**Turkey drumsticks (¼ to 1½ lbs. each):** Grill large drumsticks 1 hour; small drumsticks 45 minutes. Turn every 15 minutes. Use covered grill or wrap each drumstick loosely in heavy-duty aluminum foil, dull side out. Remove foil during last 30 minutes of cooking to brown turkey.

**Turkey half breast (2 to 2½ lbs. each):** Grill 1 hour, beginning with cavity side down and turning once. Use covered grill or wrap half breast loosely in heavy-duty aluminum foil, dull side out. Remove foil during last 30 minutes of cooking to brown turkey.

### Indirect heat cooking

To prepare coals, spread single layer of charcoal over bottom of large grill. Divide in half. Stack in pyramids on opposite sides of bottom of grill. Create a shallow heavy-duty aluminum foil drip pan; place in center of bottom of grill between pyramids. Light charcoal and let burn to glowing coal stage, about 30 minutes. Place grate over coals.

Rinse turkey and pat dry. Insert meat thermometer into center of thigh next to body and not touching bone. Position turkey in center of grill, over drip pan. Add charcoal as needed every 45 minutes during cooking to maintain heat. Cover grill with lid, venting as manufacturer directs, or with heavy-duty aluminum foil, piercing in several places to form vents. Brush turkey with sweet sauce or glaze only during last 30 minutes of cooking to avoid over-browning. Cook according to the following instructions:

**Half-bodied turkey (5 to 6 lbs.):** Before cooking, rub body cavity with salt. Skewer skin to meat along cut edges to prevent shrinking. Tie leg to tail with string. Lay wing flat over white meat and tie string around breast end to hold wing down. Grill 20 minutes per pound or to 180-185 degrees internal temperature.

**Whole-bodied turkey:** Before cooking, rub body cavity with salt. Skewer neck skin to body. Fold wings akimbo and tie legs lightly with string. Grill 11 minutes per pound or to 180-185 degrees internal temperature.

### Roasting guide

It's really easy to roast a whole turkey. Remove giblets and neck from turkey; use for soup or gravy. Rinse turkey; drain and pat dry. Rub salt and pepper into neck and body cavities. Secure drumsticks lightly with a string. Insert meat thermometer into center of thigh next to body, but not touching bone. Roast uncovered on roasting rack in 325 degree oven 20-22 minutes per pound. Turkey is done when meat thermometer registers 180-185 degrees, thick part of drumstick feels soft when pressed with thumb and forefinger, or drumstick moves easily. Let turkey stand 20 to 30 minutes before carving.

If you prefer to stuff the turkey before roasting, follow these instructions. Prepare stuffing as re-

cipe directs. Remove giblets and neck from turkey. Rinse turkey; pat dry. Rub salt and pepper into neck and body cavities. Lightly spoon stuffing into neck cavity; closer with skewer. Fill body cavity. Secure drumsticks lightly with a string and roast as previously directed. Remaining stuffing may be baked in a buttered casserole while turkey stands before carving.

A half-bodied turkey is just that—half of a whole turkey with one wing and one drumstick. If you can't find half-bodied turkeys in your meat counter, ask the butcher to saw a whole turkey in half and wrap the remaining half for the freezer. To roast a half-bodied turkey, rinse turkey; drain and pat dry. Rub salt and pepper into body cavity. Tie leg to tail with string. Lay wing flat over white meat and tie string around breast to hold wing down. Skewer skin to meat along cut edges to prevent shrinking.

Place turkey on rack in shallow roasting pan, skin side up. Insert meat thermometer into inside thigh muscle, not touching bone. Roast in 325 degree oven 2 to 2½ hours, or until meat thermometer registers 180-185 degrees, thick part of drumstick feels soft when pressed with thumb and forefinger or drumstick moves easily. Let stand 20 to 30 minutes before carving.



### Did you know?

Both Columbus and Hernando Cortez took turkeys back to Europe and by 1530 they were being raised in Italy, France and England. So when the Pilgrims arrived in 1620, they were already familiar with turkey. The native wild bird became a symbol of a bounteous harvest and a rightful part of our American heritage.

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