

Thanksgiving is celebrated in Turkey and frozen turkeys give an easier way out. The USDA states that these birds can remain frozen for ever. Nevertheless, to get the best quality, it is recommended to cook them within the one year of freezing.

The most awkward thing regarding frozen turkeys is that it is tough to thaw them properly. To prepare a safe and timely Thanksgiving meal, it is necessary to provide enough time for thawing the bird before grilling or baking.

But, how long does it take to thaw a turkey?

Let's find out!

How Long Does it Take to Thaw a Turkey?

How long varieties depending to the size of the turkey as well as the method of defrosting that is to be used. There are three safe ways to thaw a turkey: in the refrigerator, or in cold water, or in the microwave

Thawing a Turkey in the Refrigerator

This is the safest way to thaw a turkey. Place the turkey on a tray to catch drips. Keep your fridge at 40°F or colder.

- A 4 to 12-pound turkey needs 1 to 3 days.
- A 12 to 16-pound turkey takes 3 to 4 days.
- A 16 to 20-pound turkey needs 4 to 5 days.
- A 20 to 24-pound turkey takes 5 to 6 days.

Once thawed, you can keep the turkey in the fridge for another two days.

Thawing a Turkey in Cold Water

If you need to thaw a turkey quickly, use the cold water method. Place the wrapped turkey in a sink filled with cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes to keep it cold.

How Long Does it Take to Thaw a Turkey?

- A 4 to 12-pound turkey takes 2 to 6 hours.
- A 12 to 16-pound turkey needs 6 to 8 hours.
- A 16 to 20-pound turkey takes 8 to 10 hours.
- A 20 to 24-pound turkey needs 10 to 12 hours.

Cook the turkey right away after thawing it in cold water.

Thawing a Turkey in the Microwave

Disclaimer: This method is not recommended

Check your microwave manual before thawing a turkey in it. Not all microwaves can handle large turkeys. The manual will tell you the biggest turkey your microwave can safely thaw and how long to thaw it per pound.

Take the turkey out of its packaging and put it on a microwave-safe plate. Use the defrost setting based on your turkey's weight. It usually takes about 6 minutes per pound to thaw a turkey in the microwave. Turn the turkey over a few times while thawing.

If the turkey starts to cook instead of defrosting, let it cool for about 5 minutes before continuing to thaw. Cover the wing tips and drumsticks with aluminum foil halfway through thawing to prevent them from cooking too fast. Cook the turkey immediately after thawing it in the microwave.

Did you know? Microwaves create heat by making water molecules vibrate quickly. That's why it's important to rotate the turkey while thawing it to ensure even defrosting.

The Danger of Thawing at Room Temperature

Defrosting a turkey at room temperature is wrong thing to do. It takes forever and is super dangerous because bacteria love to grow in warm places. You might be tempted to thaw your turkey on the kitchen counter for a quick dinner, but this is a huge risk to your health.

Bacteria are the real problem. When meat sits at room temperature, bacteria multiply like crazy. If you poke the turkey and the inside is still frozen, the outer part gets dangerously warm. This temperature range, between 40°F and 140°F, is a breeding ground for bacteria. Eating food with lots of bacteria can cause food poisoning, which is a nasty illness.

The USDA strongly warns against thawing a turkey at room temperature. No matter how urgent your situation is, it's never worth the risk of getting sick.

Cooking a Frozen Turkey Without Thaw?

Don't worry if your turkey is still frozen on Thanksgiving morning. You can still enjoy a delicious roasted bird for dinner. Yes! The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) says it's perfectly safe to cook a turkey from frozen.

However, it will take much longer to cook than a thawed turkey. A fully frozen turkey needs about 50% more cooking time. If it's only partially frozen, it will still take longer. This is why using a meat thermometer is very important. Don't rely on the cooking times on the package.

Your turkey is ready when it reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit in the thickest part of the breast, thigh, and wing.

Last Words

Thawing a turkey is a crucial first step in preparing a delicious holiday meal. And, how long does it take to thaw a turkey depends on its size and the thawing method you choose.

There are three ways of thawing a turkey but the best technique is through the use of refrigerator. It is safe for the turkey and it takes time to cool down the temperature to required level. It takes you about a day per four or five pounds of turkey. For instance, a 12-pound turkey will take approximately three days for thawing.