

## Buying The Turkey

Uncooked turkey skin is white or pale cream in color. The color **under** the skin can range from pink to bluish depending on the amount of subcutaneous fat.

- ✓ **Fresh Unstuffed Turkey:**
  - ❖ Must be used or frozen in **1-2 days**.
- ✓ **Fresh Stuffed Turkey:**
  - ❖ Not Recommended.
  - ❖ It is difficult to heat the center of the stuffing to a high enough temperature to kill bacteria.
- ✓ **Frozen stuffed Turkey:**
  - ❖ **SHOULD NOT BE THAWED.**
  - ❖ It should be unwrapped and placed in the oven while still frozen.

## Defrosting The Turkey

- ✓ **Never defrost the turkey on a counter top.**
  - ❖ This increases the change of bacterial growth.
- ✓ **Refrigerator method. This is the safest way.**
  - ❖ It will take 1-day thawing time for every 5 pounds of turkey. For example: a 15-pound turkey will take 3 days to thaw.
  - ❖ The refrigerator has to be at 40 degrees F. or colder.
  - ❖ **Cold water method**
  - ❖ Keep the turkey wrapped in a waterproof wrap or it will absorb the water.
  - ❖ The turkey needs to be completely submerged in cold water.
  - ❖ Change the water every 30 minutes to keep it cold.
  - ❖ It will take 30 minutes per pound to defrost. For example: a 15 pound turkey will take 7 ½ hours to thaw.
  - ❖ You should cook the turkey immediately.
- ✓ **Microwave method**
  - ❖ Follow the microwave manufactures' instructions.
  - ❖ Microwave defrosting makes for "hot spots" in the turkey that will be partially cooked.
  - ❖ The turkey needs to be cooked immediately.

## Stuffing

- ✓ **Cooking a stuffed turkey carries a higher risk of food- borne illness than cooking an unstuffed turkey.**
  - ❖ It is safer to cook the stuffing separately in a casserole dish.
- ✓ **Mix up the stuffing just before you stuff the turkey.**
  - ❖ Dry and wet ingredients can be mixed up separately the night before.
  - ❖ They must be refrigerated immediately.
  - ❖ Combine them just before stuffing the turkey.
- ✓ **If sausage or oysters are used in the stuffing they must be cooked first.**
- ✓ **Do not pack the stuffing in tightly.**
  - ❖ When packed tightly the inside does not cook hot enough to kill bacteria.

- ✓ **Do not cook a stuffed turkey in a microwave.**
  - ❖ It does not get hot enough to kill bacteria.

## Cooking Safety

- ✓ **Use a meat thermometer!**
  - ❖ Do not roast a turkey in an oven below 325 degrees F -- it will start to grow bacteria.
  - ❖ Do not rely on the pop up button, or built-in thermometer, in the turkey => they are unreliable.
- ✓ **To be considered safe the turkey must be cooked until the temperature reaches 165 degrees F.**
  - ❖ Measure at the innermost section of the thigh.
- ✓ **The CENTER of the stuffing must reach 165 degrees F.**
  - ❖ If the turkey is 165 degrees F. and the stuffing is not 165 degrees F. then you must continue to cook the turkey until the stuffing is safe.
- ✓ **It is safe to cook a frozen turkey. It will just take longer.**
- ✓ **Never partially cook a turkey and let it cool to below 140 degree F.**
  - ❖ If this has happenes, DO NOT finish cooking it. It will not be safe to eat.
- ✓ **Never reheat a whole turkey.**
- ✓ **Pink meat does not mean the turkey is not safe to eat.** Fully cooked poultry that has reached 180 degrees can still be pink--and edible. There are a lot of reasons that turkey meat will remain pink when it is completely cooked. Some of them are:
  - ❖ The turkey is commercially smoked.
  - ❖ The turkey is very young.
  - ❖ The turkey was a 'free range turkey' and has more muscle tissue.
  - ❖ Grilling or smoking the turkey outdoors --even when the meat is well done.
- ✓ **What to do if the sack containing the giblets is cooked inside the turkey?**
  - ❖ If the giblets are in a paper sack and they are cooked inside the turkey they can be eaten.
  - ❖ If the giblets are in a plastic bag and the bag is melted don't use the giblets.
  - ❖ If the plastic giblet bag is melted up against a section of the turkey don't use the giblets and cut out the section of turkey that the plastic melted onto, then use the rest of the turkey.

## Leftovers

- ✓ **Do NOT leave a turkey out all day at room temperature to snack on.**
- ✓ **Do not refrigerate the whole turkey**
  - ❖ Remove the meat within two hours of roasting.
  - ❖ Refrigerate it in SHALLOW CONTAINERS to allow the meat to cool quickly.
- ✓ **Refrigerate the turkey meat, stuffing, and gravy separately.**
  - ❖ Leftover turkey will keep 3-4 days in refrigerator.
  - ❖ Stuffing and gravy will keep 1-2 days in refrigerator.
  - ❖ Bring the left over gravy to a rolling boil before serving it.
  - ❖ Other cooked dishes are expected to keep 3-4 days in refrigerator.

## Resources

- ✓ **Butterball Turkey Talkline: 1-800-BUTTERBALL OR 1-800-288-8372.**
  - ❖ You can speak to someone Monday to Friday, 8 am to 8 pm CST.
  - ❖ Pre-recorded messages of FAQs are available at all times.
  - ❖ [www.butterball.com](http://www.butterball.com)
  
- ✓ **Jennie-O Holiday Helpline: 1-800-Turkeys OR 1-800-887-2255.**
  - ❖ Answers to your turkey preparation questions, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, November 1 through January 1.
  - ❖ <http://www.jennie-o.com>
  
- ✓ **The USDA Meat/Poultry Hotline: 800-535-4555**
  - ❖ Open from 10 am to 4 pm EST.
  - ❖ They have a 24 hr tape library that can be accessed via a touch-tone phone that answers most questions.
  - ❖ US Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome>
  - ❖ Food Safety and Inspection Service: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/>
  
- ✓ **Other Websites**
  - ❖ McCormick Spices: [www.mccormick.com](http://www.mccormick.com)
  - ❖ Norbest Turkey: [www.norbest.com](http://www.norbest.com)
  - ❖ National Turkey Federation: [www.turkeyfed.org](http://www.turkeyfed.org)
  - ❖ StarChefs™ online magazine (serving the foodservice industry): [www.starchefs.com](http://www.starchefs.com)
  - ❖ Cook's *Illustrated* magazine: [www.turkeyhelp.com](http://www.turkeyhelp.com)