

Ideas

[Seasonal](#) | Celebrating Thanksgiving

Top 5 Turkey Day Questions Answered

Top 5 Turkey Day questions answered: here's a look at turkey size, defrosting and cooking time, storing leftovers and wine pairing made easy.





Nail the [turkey](#) and the wine on [Thanksgiving](#) day, and everything will be just fine—even if a few oopses and surprises pop up. So let’s look at turkey size, defrosting time, cooking, storing leftovers and wine pairing made easy.

1. What size turkey should I get for Thanksgiving?

Allow for 1.5 pounds of turkey per person. This will provide for a good amount of turkey leftovers. If your guest list is more than 10, you should consider getting two smaller turkeys rather than one extra large turkey. Consider the amount of time it takes to thaw a larger frozen turkey as well as how long it takes to cook a larger bird. The general rule for whole bird cooking is 20 minutes per pound, or until it reaches a minimum internal temperature of 165° F.

If you choose to cook two smaller turkeys, there are a few strategies. If your oven is large, you can place two small [roasting pans](#) next to one another in the oven and cook them both at the same time.. Smaller oven? Cook one of the turkeys whole as the “show bird” and break down the other turkey into pieces (breast, leg, thigh, etc.). Turkey that is cut into pieces takes less time to cook than a whole bird, and doesn’t require a roasting pan; you can roast them in a [sheet pan](#) or [large casserole pan](#).

2. How long does it take to defrost a frozen turkey?

When thawing a frozen turkey in the [refrigerator](#), (the safest way to thaw a turkey) it takes 24 hours for every four pounds of turkey. This means if you buy a 15-lb turkey, you need to allow 3.75 days. So, to have a thoroughly thawed 15-lb turkey ready on Thanksgiving morning, you should move the frozen turkey from the freezer to the refrigerator the Sunday night before Thanksgiving.

3. Is roasting in the oven the only way to cook a turkey?

Roasting a turkey in the oven is probably the most common way of cooking your Thanksgiving bird, but frying has gained popularity. For deep frying a turkey, there are [indoor turkey fryers](#)(electric) and [outdoor turkey fryers](#) (propane). Remember, though, with any method, turkey should be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F. Both roasting and deep frying a turkey have a few important cooking rules.

We'll let our friends at [Butterball](#) explain the basics:

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How to deep fry a turkey

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A guide to safely roasting a turkey. Oven

4. What wine should I serve with Thanksgiving dinner?

With so many flavors on the table, we completely understand how choosing wine that goes with all of them is a big challenge. Here are a few tips for navigating wine selection.

- **Choose fruity flavor notes.** Steer towards wines that have fruity flavor notes such as cherry, blackberry, raspberry, currant (for reds) or apple, pear and orange (for whites).
- **Pair flavor notes with your turkey's seasoning.** If you're cooking a turkey with distinctive flavor profiles (like a [Citrus Mustard Basted Turkey](#) or [Pomegranate Maple Glazed Turkey](#), choose wines that have complementary notes, like citrus or pomegranate, respectively.
- **Avoid wines with strong tannins or "oaky" flavors.** Tannins are the flavors that give that pucker or grippy feeling to the mouth when you drink wine. While a wine with strong tannins may pair well with some of the savory dishes on your Thanksgiving table, they don't tend to pair as easily with sweeter dishes, like sweet potatoes or desserts.

Need a single solution?

A light-bodied red wine like [pinot noir](#) is a great choice because full-bodied red wine drinkers enjoy it but is light enough for those who prefer a light-bodied or white wine. [Sparkling white wine](#) is also a festive (bubbles!) and practical selection. Both choices pair very well with the Thanksgiving meal, and appeal to many tastes.

If you're planning to buy some white and some red:

- Red: In addition to pinot noir, try a fuller-bodied but low-tannin and fruity wine like zinfandel.
- White: Select a [chardonnay that's not oaky](#), or a [dry riesling](#) with with flavor notes that will complement your star dish.

You don't have to pick only one wine, by the way—choose multiple wines and see what your guests like.

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5. How long does cooked turkey keep in the fridge?

Cooked turkey will keep for about three days in the refrigerator. Before it goes into the fridge, remember to debone the meat and place it in an [airtight container](#). Looking for leftover turkey recipes?

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