

Buying and Thawing Turkey

Important facts you need to know.

One of the first things to remember when buying a turkey is buy it well in advance of when you plan to cook it. The turkey you buy will probably be frozen and it takes a long time to correctly thaw a frozen turkey. In fact, it may take from one-to-three days.

Buying your turkey.

The turkey in the grocery store today is the result of improved production methods and the tenderness of the bird depends primarily on its age and how it's handled before it's cooked. You may see tom turkeys priced differently than hen turkeys, however, there is no real difference in the tenderness of the two.

When buying a tom or a hen, look for the word "young" on the label. Young turkeys are best for roasting. The tenderness of your turkey can be influenced by the way you cook it. How dry it is and, to some extent, the amount of natural fat in the turkey are other factors.

In most cases, large turkeys are usually better buys than small ones. You pay less per pound for large turkeys than for small turkeys. Large turkeys have a higher proportion of meat to bone than do small turkeys.

All turkeys shipped across state lines must be federally inspected for wholesomeness and labeled with the government stamp. While the grading as A, B, and C., is not mandatory, it is a good guide. Many brands carry the grade shield. Most turkeys in retail stores are Grade A.

When shopping for a turkey, make sure the store's freezer case is at zero degrees or below. Don't buy frozen turkeys stacked above the load line in the freezer or those packed in ice in the aisle displays.

Look for undamaged wrappings because exposure to air dehydrates the meat and impairs the quality. Select the



A fifteen-pound turkey will provide twice as many servings as a ten-pound bird due to the larger proportion of meat to bone. When you buy a turkey weighing twelve pounds or less figure about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound per serving.

size turkey you need for the occasion or plan left-overs for the freezer. You can save money by basting your own turkey. Those advertised as "self-basting" cost more than those which are unbasted.

Thawing turkeys...

Thaw the bird in its original wrapper on a tray in the refrigerator...never thaw a turkey at room temperature. It's important that you keep the frozen turkey's outer surface cool during thawing to prevent bacterial growth on the outside while the inside is still cold.

Quick thawing tricks.

If you have only hours instead of days to thaw your turkey, you can get two large brown paper bags, the kind grocery stores use. Put the turkey in one of the grocery bags, then, put that bag inside the empty one, open end first. This keeps the cold air inside the bag

and keeps the surface of the turkey cool while the inside of the bird thaws. Thawing time for a turkey that weighs eight-to-twelve pounds should be only 10 -12 hours.

Another quick and safe method for thawing a turkey is to use cold tap water. Put the turkey in the sink or in a pan and cover it with cold tap water. Change the water often. This way the turkey will thaw in six to eight hours.

Keep the bird in the original wrapper and as soon as the bird is pliable, remove the package of giblets and the neck which are wrapped and stored inside the body cavity. Refrigerate or freeze the giblets immediately if you're not going to use them right away.

For more information on buying and thawing a turkey; contact your local county Extension office.