

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for November 16, 2020
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, and Healthy Relationships we'll talk about cooking that Thanksgiving turkey, and I'll take time to thank the partners that make our OSU Extension programs possible.

I have a theory. Since many families are choosing not to gather for Thanksgiving this year due to the pandemic, some people may be thinking of cooking a turkey on their own, possibly for the first time.

My advice? Go for it! Roasting a turkey is relatively easy. This time of year, there are some very good deals on turkeys, so this can be an inexpensive way to load up your freezer for future meals.

Here are some common questions and answers for cooking your bird safely this holiday.

How large a turkey should I purchase? Part of this answer depends on the number of people who will be eating the holiday meal. But don't forget about precious leftovers. According to the USDA, you should allow 1 pound of turkey per person. That may sound ridiculous but remember that all the pounds that make up a turkey are not meat.

How do I defrost a frozen turkey? When you purchase a frozen turkey from the store keep in mind that it takes approximately 24 hours to defrost 4 to 5 pounds in a refrigerator. That means a 12 to 16-pound turkey will need 3 to 4 days to thaw, and a 20 to 24-pound turkey will require 5 to 6 days.

Now when I was a kid, Thanksgiving morning meant watching the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade while a honkin' big turkey swam in our kitchen sink full of cold water. The USDA recommends that if you use the cold-water method, be sure to have the turkey wrapped securely so that water is not able to leak through the wrapping. Submerge your wrapped turkey in cold tap water and change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed.

Stuffed or unstuffed? I have no place in my heart for a stuffed turkey. The only thing good about stuffing a turkey is one less pan to clean later. Adding stuffing means that the total cook time will increase about 15 to 30 minutes compared to an unstuffed bird.

How long does it take to roast a turkey? Be sure that your oven temperature is no lower than 325 degrees F. The low and slow method is OK for prime rib, but it is not safe for poultry in an oven. The key is using a food thermometer. The only way you know the turkey is done is when the temperature reaches 165 degrees F. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. Approximate times are 3 hours for a 12-pound turkey and 4.5 hours for a 20-pound turkey.

I am a fan of oven roasting bags. There are large sizes made especially for turkeys. These always reduce cooking time compared to no bag, so be sure to read the cooking-time table included with the bags for approximate times. I'll also mention that brown paper bags were never intended to be used to cook a turkey.

What about deep fat frying or smoking a turkey? There are lots of other methods besides roasting a turkey in the oven. USDA has some great advice on alternate methods of cooking turkeys. One thing to keep in mind is that a turkey for deep fat frying should be 12 pounds or less. No matter the method, the internal temperature of turkey must reach 165 degrees F. There is so much more we could address. Be sure to check out our website for more resources at coshocton.osu.edu.

Now I'd like to take a moment to thank some exceptional partners that have been instrumental in offering our OSU Extension programs lately. Last Thursday we finished up our Dining with Diabetes series at the Coshocton Regional Medical Center. For four weeks, the 12 participants enjoyed diabetes-friendly recipes prepared by Coshocton Hospital staff and had lessons focused on carbohydrates, fat, sodium, and fiber. I am grateful for this partnership with Coshocton Regional Medical Center and their commitment to caring for our community.

I am also thankful for the Coshocton Public Library and their emphasis on adult learning. The staff that concentrate on adult programming are always coming up with creative ways to keep us engaged, and I enjoy being able to be a small part of the programs that they offer. We have many people in our community who are working in agencies and for organizations that truly make a positive impact on Coshocton County. Thank you for your commitment to excellence and service and keep up the great work!

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!