

# How to Cook a Turkey like a Pro

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If you want to learn how to cook a turkey that is perfect every time, learn from Annette. She is a pro and has had lots of practice over the past 35 years. Annette has cooked more than 120 turkeys.

Cooking a turkey at Thanksgiving is one of the cheapest ways to feed your family. Even if you don't host a group for this annual event, buying a turkey at this time of year and cooking it, will warm up your home and produce a mouth-watering aroma. A Thanksgiving Turkey will also provide inexpensive poultry meat which can be incorporated into a number of other delicious meals. We always buy the largest turkeys we can find — 22 to 26 pounds. These will provide the most excess meat to be used for other meals. It's just as much work to cook a 12-pound turkey as it is to cook a 22-pound turkey. We know that some people swear by fresh (unfrozen) turkeys, but when you compare price, convenience and the ability to stock up for the future, the frozen turkey wins every time.

## Step 1 — The Bath

The night before Annette cooks a turkey, she fills our deep kitchen sink with cold water and adds one cup of salt. She unwraps the bird and places it in the water, then covers it with a clean towel to keep the top moist. Using this method, a 24-pound bird is defrosted in about ten hours.

## Step 2 — Into the Pan

When the turkey is defrosted, remove all gizzards and the neck. Be sure to check both neck and body cavities. Annette cooks up the gizzards to add to the dogs' food, with lots of garlic powder. Our large dogs love them, but Annette can't handle eating them. She cooks the bird in a rectangular, black enamel roasting pan. We have several of these, which we've found at thrift stores over the past few years. These pans also work great for lasagna, but that's for a different holiday. The disposable aluminum pans will work fine for a smaller bird, but are dangerously flimsy when carrying a larger one.

## Step 3 — Get Stuffed

You don't have to stuff the bird. The stuffing tastes better if you do, but the bird takes longer to cook. We do stuff our Thanksgiving turkey, but other times during the year when we cook a turkey, we don't. Stuffing can be cooked apart from the turkey in the oven.

While making your stuffing, also prepare a basting solution for the turkey. In a large bowl or 8 cup measuring cup with a handle, mix four cups of water and four chicken bouillon cubes. Let it sit until the bouillon dissolves or zap it in the microwave for five minutes if you need it quickly.

Once the stuffing is in both cavities, use plain, unwaxed dental floss and six-nine inch metal skewers to lace up the openings. If this is hard to understand, go ahead and call anyone over 60 and they'll help you.

## **Step 4 — Get Seared**

Put your oven rack in its lowest position and set the oven temperature to 450 degrees. The first hour of cooking is dedicated to searing the turkey. Slide the turkey and pan into the oven and set a timer for 20 minutes. When the timer rings, pour 2 cups of your basting broth over the turkey and put back in the oven for another 20 minutes. When the timer rings again, repeat the previous step, using the remaining 2 cups of broth and put the turkey back in the oven for 20 minutes. If your turkey is less than 15 pounds, you'll only need to sear for about 40 minutes.

## **Step 5 — The Tent**

After the searing is done, remove the bird from the oven and securely cover the entire turkey with aluminum foil — this creates a “tent” and retains heat to keep the bird moist while thoroughly cooking it. Turn the oven temperature down to 350 degrees, put the covered turkey in the oven and cook for the remaining time — approximately 3 hours for a 22- to 26-pound turkey. When the turkey is done, take it out of the oven and allow it to sit for 20 minutes. Then scoop out the stuffing, and transfer the broth for gravy. Carve up the meat and layer it on a beautiful platter.

## **Step 6 — Making Gravy**

Take the broth from the turkey pan and put it into a 4-8 quart pot. Put the pot on a medium heat and bring to a boil. While the broth is heating up, add 2 Tbs. of lecithin granules to break down the fat. Next add 1 tsp. of rosemary, tarragon, basil and thyme while mixing thoroughly. Thicken with cornstarch or flour. Put 2 Tbs. of cornstarch in a one-cup liquid measure and add enough water to liquefy the mixture into a thin paste — a little thinner than Elmer's Glue. Slowly pour this mixture into the boiling broth while stirring. You now have one of the easiest turkey-cooking recipes out there, from frozen to cooked in about 15 hours. Served with love and gratitude, your juicy bird will boast of your culinary expertise.