

Roasting a pasture raised turkey

IMPORTANT NOTE: Pasture raised meat cooks **FASTER** than ‘store bought’.

Our culinary expert suggests putting the meat thermometer in the meaty breast and removing the bird from when that temperature reaches 155°. The bird will continue to cook when it is ‘resting’ (out of the oven)

From “Storey’s Guide to Raising Turkeys” by Leonard S. Mercia

Place turkey, breast side up on a rack in a shallow pan.

If desired, brush turkey with butter, margarine or cooking oil

If using a meat thermometer (recommended), insert it into the thickest part of the thigh or breast, making sure the thermometer does not touch the bone.

Roast in oven set at 325° F. When the thermometer in the thigh registers 180° F (breast 170° F), the bird is done

Approximate cooking times for **unstuffed** turkey, if stuffed – **ADD** ½ hour

Weight (pounds)	Time (hours)
12-14	3 - 3 ½
14-18	3 ½ - 4
18 - 20	3 ¾ - 4 ¼
20-24	4 ¼ - 4 ¾

Birds 24 pounds and more should be roasted unstuffed. It will be difficult to get a bird this size to the proper internal temperature if it is stuffed.

From “ The Grassfed Gourmet Cookbook” by Shannon Hayes

Grass-fed turkeys come in all shapes and sizes, so it’s not possible to give precise cooking times. The only sure way to have a properly cooked turkey is to use an internal meat thermometer.

Set turkey, breast side **DOWN**, in well-oiled rack. Toss some chopped onions, carrots and celery in the cavity, scatter some of same in roasting pan with 1 cup of water.

Roast turkey, **basting every hour**. Add water to vegetables in roasting pan if the vegetables begin to look dehydrated.

Continue roasting and basting until the thermometer in the **thigh** reaches 170°F.

Note for first time cooks:

These are NOT ‘Butterball’ turkeys. The meat is a little darker and more flavorful.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE WEB FOR TURKEYS

We suggest you invest in a **meat thermometer** and insert it into the thigh not touching the bone. Cook your turkey at 300-325 degrees, covered, breast side down. The last 20-30 minutes you can turn your bird over and remove the cover. When your thermometer reaches 160 degrees your bird is done. Remove it from the oven 5-10 degrees before it hits done, cover it and let it set on the counter to finish cooking and to disperse the juices throughout the bird.

A general rule of thumb it will take 1/3 to 1/2 the time to cook your bird than factory turkeys you buy in the store that are injected with who knows what

Naturally, when using pasture raising methods it takes longer to raise a bird and the fat profiles of these birds are more delicate. (They are higher in the Omega-3 fatty acid.) Consequently pastured turkeys must be cooked at a lower temperature for a longer period of time. This means the flavor is already in pastured birds so our job is to bring that flavor out, not hide it or destroy it. The trick is slow cooking at 325 degrees and keeping the bird well covered until the last thirty minutes. You know it's done when the meat separates from the bone and juices run clear. Remember to use your thermometer. Insert it into the center of the inner thigh muscle, not touching the bone, and cook to a minimum internal temperature of 180 degrees. Pastured turkeys have longer growing periods and their meat textures are well developed. So season lightly and cook it slow and **covered. That's part of the great taste.**
<http://www.texasgrassfedbeef.com/id82.htm>

Below are some general cooking suggestions for heritage turkey from chef Dan Barber of the delicious Stone Barns and Blue Hill Restaurant in New York (75 Washington Place - 212-539-1776).

"I prefer these heritage breeds for their flavor, and the tendency for this meat to stay moist longer is a big reason for it.

I recommend cooking the bird (see recipe below) until the breasts are finished, and then removing the legs and continue cooking them in the oven. It's nearly impossible to get a perfectly cooked breast and legs at the same time because the legs take so much longer.

The result, if you follow the advice, is a turkey that doesn't need gravy.

I'd stay away from brining the birds as well. That's a good technique for a bird that's not on pasture. But these heritage breeds have distinct flavors reflecting the diversity of their diets. You'll lose that if you brine them.

Remember especially to take your bird out of the refrigerator a full 40 minutes before you roast it. The cooking time will vary dramatically.

I like to throw the carcass and scraps of meat into a big pot at the end of the night and make a rich turkey broth for the next day. Just simmer the bones and meat for a few hours; add vegetables and herbs, and if you like, a little wine, and don't let it boil. You want a clear broth."

- Preheat oven to 475
- Let turkey come to room temp
- Carefully separate skin from the breast meat and rub softened butter on to breast
- Season liberally with salt and pepper
- Set the turkey, breast side up, on a rack of a large roasting pan. Tie the legs together with kitchen string.
- Roast for 20 minutes. Lower the oven temperature to 350 degrees and cover turkey loosely with tin foil. Roast for about 3 1/2 hours, or until the thermometer inserted into the inner thigh registers 150 degrees.
- Transfer turkey to cutting board. Let stand for at least 45 minutes to cool down.
- Remove legs and thighs, careful to not take too much skin with you.
- Place thighs, skin side, on a roasting pan and continue cooking, 40-45 minutes or until juices run clear.
- Separately slice breast and thigh and plate while still warm.