



NEWS RELEASE

November 2004

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Turkey Alternate Routes to the Table

Just as a detour causes a car to take an alternate route, circumstances can alter the chosen cooking method for a turkey. An oven may fail at an inopportune time, a power outage may occur, and more than one large food item may need cooking. The conventional oven -- although the appliance most often used to cook a whole turkey -- is not the only way to get the big bird done and beautiful. The following are a few methods suggested by the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline are alternate routes for cooking a turkey safely. Others are available on the web at <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/altroute.htm>.

Electric Roaster Oven

This tabletop appliance serves as an extra oven for cooking a turkey or large roast. Generally the cooking time and oven temperature setting are the same as for conventional cooking. Always check the roaster's use and care manual for the manufacturer's recommended temperature settings.

Preheat the oven to at least 325 °F. Place the turkey on the roaster oven rack or other meat rack so the turkey is raised out of the juices that collect in the bottom of the oven liner. Leave the lid on throughout cooking, removing it as little as possible to avoid slowing the cooking process.

Cooking bags can be used in the roaster oven as long as the bag does not touch the sides, bottom, or lid. Follow directions given by the cooking bag manufacturer, and use a food thermometer to be sure the internal temperature in the inner thigh reaches 180°F.

Microwaving a Turkey

Turkeys can be successfully cooked in a microwave oven -- whole or in parts. Turkey parts can be cooked in a dish with a lid, or cover the dish with plastic wrap and vent the top. Timing can vary because of wattage differences, so follow the recommendations in the owner's manual. A 12- to 14- pound turkey is the maximum size most microwaves can accommodate. Microwaves sometimes cook a whole turkey unevenly, so microwaving it in an oven cooking bag aids in even heat distribution. Microwaving a stuffed turkey is not recommended. The stuffing may not be cooked to the proper internal temperature when the turkey itself is done. Cook the stuffing in a separate casserole.

Allow 3 inches oven clearance on top and 2 to 3 inches of space around the bird. The time for cooking a turkey in the microwave is 9 to 10 minutes per pound on medium (50%) power. Rotate the bird during cooking to ensure even cooking.

If the bird is defrosted in the microwave, cook it immediately. Always use a food thermometer to determine doneness. Temperature should reach 180°F when measured in the thigh. After removing from the microwave, let the turkey stand 20 minutes before carving it.

Source: Food Safety and Inspection Service, USDA (October 1999). "Turkey Alternate Routes to the Table".
Online at www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/pubs/altroute.htm