



# Turkey Tips (including deep frying!)

**From the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency  
Division of Environmental Health**

It's tradition; football, turkey, naps, and lots of food! In recent years, however, this tradition has taken a new twist – by this we mean – deep frying!! It's typical American ingenuity, “why not take that healthy food and deep fry it? Well, if deep frying is your bag, or if the old fashion baking in the oven is the method of choice, we have you covered. The big concern with deep frying is... safety. Let's not burn down the homestead for the holidays. This year, the Community Health Agency has taken the time to provide you with some helpful tips to make this Thanksgiving go smoothly and quite possibly more enjoyable whether you are baking or deep frying the bird. We only wish we had some helpful hints for the Lions too, but I'm sure you can come up with some of those on your own (be nice though, it's the holidays!)

## **A Deep Fried Delicacy or a disaster waiting to happen?**

### **How-To safely Deep Fry a Turkey**

Deep-fried turkey, a concept that started in the south, is gradually rising in popularity nationwide. It's a perfect twist for barbecues, block parties and holiday feasts. To get you started, we have several deep-fried turkey recipes for you. For a deep frying turkey experience that is fun and produces delicious results follow these guidelines:



### **Equipment**

You'll need a 40 quart or 60 quart heavy pot with lid and basket, burner and propane gas tank, a candy thermometer to measure oil temperature and a food thermometer to determine doneness of the turkey. For added safety, have a fire extinguisher, oven mitts and pot holders nearby (perhaps a brother-in-law who is a volunteer fireman; this is optional). To add flavor with different marinades and seasonings, you may want to purchase an injector.

### **Location**

Place the fryer on level dirt or a grassy area. Never fry a turkey indoors, in a garage or in any other structure attached to a building. Avoid frying on wood decks, which could catch fire, and concrete, which can be stained by the oil.

### **The Turkey - Size Matters**

Smaller turkeys, 8 pounds to 10 pounds and turkey parts, such as breast, wings, drumsticks and thighs, are best for frying. Size does matter as a 12 pound to 14 pound turkey is the maximum size bird that can be successfully deep fried. In addition to the obvious safety concern of lowering and lifting a big turkey into a vessel of boiling oil, larger birds simply cook longer. The extra cooking time results in over exposure to the skin, which will likely be over cooked.

If a larger bird (over 15-pounds) has been purchased, follow these steps for the best results. Detach the dark meat (leg and thigh portions) from the breast and fry the two turkey parts separately. Fry the leg/thigh sections first in oil that has been preheated to 365 degrees F-375 degrees F. Cook to an internal temperature of 180 degrees F. Remove the dark sections and reheat the oil to 365 degrees F-375 degrees F. Then fry the turkey breast to an internal temperature of 170 degrees F.

### **Frying the Turkey**

- Once the oil has come to temperature, place the turkey in the basket and slowly lower into the pot.
- Whole turkeys require approximately 3 minutes per pound to cook. Remove turkey and check internal temperature with meat thermometer. The temperature should be at least 165 degrees F, but preferable 170 degrees F in the breast and 180 degrees F in the thigh.

### **Additional Safety Tips**

- Never leave the hot oil unattended and don't allow children or pets near the cooking area.
- Allow the oil to cool completely before disposing or storing.
- Immediately wash hands, utensils, equipment and surfaces that have come in contact with raw turkey.

Turkey should be consumed immediately and leftovers stored in the refrigerator within two hours of cooking

Turkey parts such as breast, wings and thighs require approximately 4 minutes to 5 minutes per pound to come to temperature

### **Oil Storage**

Peanut oil should be covered and refrigerated to prevent it from becoming rancid. Peanut oil is more perishable than other oils and must be stored in the refrigerator if kept longer than one month. Peanut oil may even be frozen. The oil will thicken when it is chilled, but will return to its original consistency when reheated. The oil will also develop a cloudy appearance that may remain when brought back to room temperature and will only clear up temporarily while heated.

## Some General Turkey Tips

- Whole turkey can be held at 35-40F for 1-2 days and 12 months at 0F.
- Leftover turkey can be held in the refrigerator 35-40F for 3 to 4 days.
- If you freeze it you can keep it as long as 4 months.
- To boil or not to boil – that is the question

## Thawing out the Bird!

### In the refrigerator

<u>Turkey Weight</u>	<u>Days to Allow for Thawing Turkey</u>
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8 to 12 pounds	2 to 2.5 days
12 to 16 pounds	2.5 to 4 days
16 to 20 pounds	4 to 5 days
20 to 24 pounds	5 to 6 days



**COLD Water Turkey Thawing-** Place bird in large pan, run water continuously so that the excess runs down the drain.

<u>Turkey Weight</u>	<u>Hours</u>
8 to 12 pounds	4 to 6 hours
12 to 16 pounds	6 to 8 hours
16 to 20 pounds	8 to 10 hours
20 to 24 pounds	10 to 12 hours

## Cooking the Bird



### Cooking times

<b>Weight</b>	<b>Unstuffed Turkey</b>	<b>Stuffed Turkey</b>
8 to 12 pounds	2 3/4 to 3 hours	3 to 3 1/2 hours
12 to 14 pounds	3 to 3 3/4 hours	3 1/2 to 4 hours
14 to 18 pounds	3 3/4 to 4 1/4 hours	4 to 4 1/4 hours
18 to 20 pounds	4 1/4 to 4 1/2 hours	4 1/4 to 4 3/4 hours
20 to 24 pounds	4 1/2 to 5 hours	4 3/4 to 5 1/4 hours
24 to 30 pounds	5 to 5 1/4 hours	5 1/4 to 6 1/4 hours