

Give Bird The Heat Then Eat

"How long do I roast my turkey?" is one of the most frequently asked questions at this time of the year.

This, of course, varies with the size of the bird, says Miss Bea Layman, senior home economist for the Southern California Gas Co.

The home economist suggests that the times recommended by the California Turkey Advisory Board be followed for roasting turkeys in gas ranges:

Four to six pound turkeys should be roasted at 325 degrees for two to two and one-half hours; six to eight pound turkeys, two and one-half to three hours at 325 degrees; eight to 12 pounds, three to three and one-half hours at 325 degrees; and 12 to 16 pounds, three and one-half hours at 325 degrees.

SIXTEEN TO 20-pound birds require four to four and one-half hours roasting at 300 degrees, and 20- to 22-pounders, four and one-half to five hours at 300 degrees.

Housewives who have gas ranges equipped with an automatic meat thermometer will have an easier time, the home economist pointed out. All they have to do is insert the meat probe into the turkey and wait for the range to indicate automatically that the fowl is done. The meat thermometer should show 185-190 degrees when the turkey is completely roasted, she said.

The gas company home economist also offers some helpful suggestions for the preparation of your holiday turkey.

STUFF THE turkey just before placing it in the oven, allowing three-quarters to one cup of stuffing per pound ready-to-cook weight. First, stuff the wishbone cavity and skewer the neck skin to the back. Tuck the wing tips behind the shoulder joints, then rub the cavity with salt.

The home economist recommends that you spoon in the stuffing, then shake the bird to settle the stuffing, but do not pack. Close the opening by placing skewers across it, and lace shut with a cord. Tie the drumsticks securely to the tail. If the opening has a band of skin across it, push the drumsticks underneath it, and you won't need to fasten the opening or tie the legs.

Grease the skin thoroughly. If you use a meat thermometer, it should be placed in the thigh, well imbedded in the meat or in the thickest meaty part of the body.

PLACE TURKEY on rack in shallow roasting pan, breast up or down. (In recent tests, a tendency has been noted for meat to be more moist when the turkey is cooked breast down; however, it does not have the over-all golden brown appearance associated with the traditional breast-up method). Cover with a loose "cap" of aluminum foil, pressing it lightly at the drumstick and breast ends. Roast at a constant low temperature.

When the turkey is about two-thirds done, cut the cord or band of skin so that heat can reach the inside of the thighs.

ABOUT 20 MINUTES before the roasting time is up, test the doneness by pressing the thick part of the drumstick between your fingers, protecting your hand with a paper towel. The meat should feel very soft. Also move the drumstick up and down... if done, it should move easily or twist out of joint. (If you use a meat thermometer, it should register 185-190 degrees.)

When the turkey is done, remove it from the pan and keep it warm while you make gravy from the pan drippings. For easier and neater carving, let the turkey stand for 20 minutes.

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