

# AGGIE life



**With a little patience, anyone can prepare this holiday icon**



STUART HUTSON

frozen, unlike average turkeys that need to be thawed.

When choosing which turkey to buy, keep in mind the number of people you will be feeding. The conventional wisdom is to allow a pound to a pound and a half per person, but if you are feeding typical, hungry college students, I would suggest allowing at least two pounds per person.

### Preparation

Contrary to tradition, I do not suggest stuffing your turkey. The stuffing adds no flavor to the bird, and the turkey flavor can be added to the stuffing by using the drippings from the turkey instead of water for the stuffing recipe. Stuffing the bird is just extra mess and makes the cooking time longer.

After removing the plastic wrapping, reach into the neck cavity (the hole at the end with the two little wings) and pull out the giblet bag. This is a wax-paper bag with the turkey's once-vital organs inside.

Reach into the other end and remove the neck. Take heart — this is the grossest part of preparing a turkey.

Rinse the inside and outside of the turkey with cold water and pat it dry with paper towels.

Do not — I repeat — do not wear the turkey on your head a la Mr. Bean or Monica (from "Friends"). Raw turkey is an breeding ground for bacteria that can make you very sick, so be careful to wash all exposed areas thoroughly with an antibacterial agent and do not use the same utensils for pre-cooked and post-cooked food.

Chop up some onion and whatever other flavorings you would like, and insert them into the main cavity of the turkey with some salt and pepper. Try not to think about where you are sticking your hand

while you are doing this.

With a needle and thread or store-bought skewers and laces, close the main body cavity. I suggest using the skewers and laces. They only cost about \$1 and make the entire process much simpler.

Put the turkey into a shallow roasting pan and coat the entire turkey with melted butter. Toss on a little salt and pepper, dump a cup of water or turkey stock into the pan, insert a meat thermometer deep into the thigh (not touching the bone) and seal the turkey tight with aluminum foil.

### Roasting Tom

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees, and start cooking. The turkey's packaging should give you a time estimate based on the weight of the bird. Generally, an eight- to 12-pound turkey will take three to three and a half hours to cook. The biggest problem with cooking a turkey is that the white meat often dries out. This is because the white meat (the breast) is done when the turkey reaches 170 degrees, but the dark meat (the legs and wings) should be cooked until the turkey reaches 180 degrees.

To solve this problem, keep the turkey tightly sealed with aluminum foil to keep the moisture in. You should only remove the foil every 40 minutes to one hour to baste the turkey with the drippings that accumulate in the pan, and then one hour before the turkey is done to allow the turkey to brown.

Many instructions suggest only "tenting" or loosely covering the turkey with aluminum foil, but this tends to lead to a drier turkey. Some instructions also suggest browning the turkey first and then covering it, but this generally results in burnt skin. Also, regardless of what instructions come with the turkey, do not cook at any temperature greater than 325 degrees.

The turkey is done when the meat thermometer reaches 180 degrees and the juices that come out of the turkey when it is poked run clear. Do not trust pop-up timers that come with the turkey. These often get glued down by the turkey's juices.

### Carving

Be careful when removing the turkey from the pan. The drippings are hot and the wings have a tendency to fall off. Remove any string or skewers, wait 15 to 30 minutes for the turkey to cool down and then carve.

During the cooling time, use the drippings to make the stuffing and gravy. For the gravy, you can either use a store-bought mix or just add one tablespoon of olive oil and two tablespoons of flour with one and a half cups of drippings to make your own.

The graphic below shows how to carve a turkey.

### Leftovers

Turkey can be safely kept at room temperature for up to two hours and can last up to four days in the refrigerator. So you have half a week to turn the leftover pieces of that delicious bird into multiple meals.

If the old standby of mayonnaise and bread begins to lose its flavor, any number of meals may be prepared with turkey. Turkey is great as stir-fry, and turkey combined with sautéed onions, peppers, canned tomatoes and kidney beans makes a great chili.

For other ideas, there will be a variety available on the Internet.

### Step 1)

Allow the turkey to cool 15 to 30 minutes after cooking before carving. If you are right-handed, position the bird so that its legs point to your right. Grab a fork and a long, sharp knife.



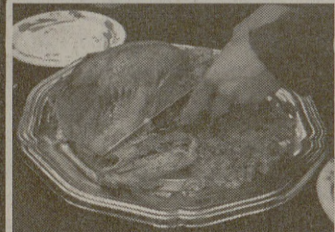
### Step 2)

With the knife, find the natural division between the thigh and the body, and, holding the main body of the turkey steady with the fork, slice down vertically until the leg is severed. Be aware that you will encounter some tough tendons that you will need to saw through. Cut or pull the drumstick from the thigh.



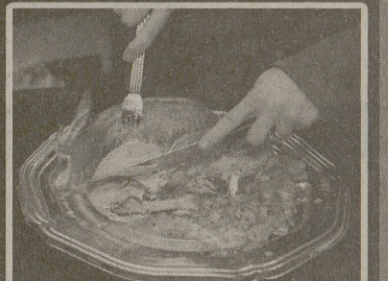
### Step 3)

With the knife, find the joint that binds the wing to the main body and slice through it. If you have prepared the turkey properly, the wing should come off easily.



### Step 4)

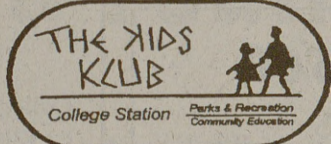
Make a horizontal cut directly above the wing, along the entire length of the turkey. Cut all the way to the center bone that divides the turkey in half. Then cut directly downward in equally thick slices.



PHOTOS BY CHAD ADAMS GRAPHIC BY RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

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