Thanksgiving Turkey Chart 2026

How big a turkey to buy, when to move it to the fridge, and how long to roast it, for 8 to 24 guests. Thanksgiving is Thursday, November 26, 2026.

Guests	Turkey to buy	Thaw in fridge	Move to fridge by (morning)	Thaw in cold water	Roast unstuffed, 325 °F	Roast stuffed, 325 °F
8	8 lb	2 days	**Tue Nov 24**	4 hours	2¾–3 hours	3–3½ hours
10	10 lb	2–3 days	**Mon Nov 23**	5 hours	2¾–3 hours	3–3½ hours
12	12 lb	3 days	**Mon Nov 23**	6 hours	2¾–3 hours	3–3½ hours
14	14 lb	3–4 days	**Sun Nov 22**	7 hours	3–3¾ hours	3½–4 hours
16	16 lb	4 days	**Sun Nov 22**	8 hours	3¾–4¼ hours	4–4¼ hours
18	18 lb	4–5 days	**Sat Nov 21**	9 hours	3¾–4¼ hours	4–4¼ hours
20	20 lb	4–5 days	**Sat Nov 21**	10 hours	4¼–4½ hours	4¼–4¾ hours
22	22 lb	5–6 days	**Fri Nov 20**	11 hours	4½–5 hours	4¾–5¼ hours
24	24 lb	5–6 days	**Fri Nov 20**	12 hours	4½–5 hours	4¾–5¼ hours

How much: USDA allows 1 lb of turkey per person. For a frozen pre-stuffed turkey allow 1¼ lb per person and cook it from frozen, following the package directions (the roasting times above are for thawed birds).

Fridge thawing: about 24 hours for every 4 to 5 lb. The "move to fridge by" date counts back from Thanksgiving using the slower 4 lb per day (our choice, so the bird is ready in time). A thawed turkey keeps 1 to 2 days in the fridge.

Cold-water thawing: about 30 minutes per lb. Wrap the turkey securely so water can't leak in, change the water every 30 minutes, and cook it right after it thaws. Do not refreeze.

Done: a whole turkey is safe at 165 °F, checked in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. Let it stand 20 minutes before carving.

More than 24 guests? USDA's roasting table stops at 24 lb, so cook two or more smaller birds (our choice). Kids, hearty eaters, other meats and your own roasting date: use the free calculator at guestcalculator.com/meat-per-person-calculator.

Source: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, "Let's Talk Turkey: A Consumer Guide to Safely Roasting a Turkey" (fsis.usda.gov, last updated 17 Nov 2023): turkey per person, thawing rates and times, roasting timetable at 325 °F, 165 °F and standing time. Turkey weights are rounded up to the next whole pound; fridge and cold-water figures are calculated from USDA's per-pound rates. This chart is general guidance, not a substitute for your oven, your thermometer or the package label.