

High-Temperature Roasting

You can roast a turkey at very high heat, which takes half the time and makes for crisp skin and juicy meat. In my opinion, however, you have little control over the roasting process, and while the meat is juicy it is less tender than that of a turkey roasted in a moderate oven. However, the following system has worked for me.

Roast uncovered at 500°F for about 30 minutes, or until the accumulated fat begins to burn in the bottom of the pan. Then reduce the thermostat to 450°F, and add to the pan the chopped vegetables plus 2 cups of water, adding a little more water as needed during roasting. (Water prevents the juices from burning and smoking up not only the whole kitchen but the whole house!) A 14-pound bird will take 2 hours or so.

SPECIAL NOTE

The Re-assembled Roast Turkey

It takes half the time to cook, yet looks just like a whole roast turkey. Illustrated directions are on the next pages. The breasts are bone-in but fully trimmed, meaning the backbone, wishbone, and scraps have been removed; the rib ends are trimmed off to where the breast meat begins. Each leg-thigh has been removed in one piece, and the thigh is boned for easy carving.

The following estimates are for turkey roasted in a 325°F oven to a meat thermometer reading of around 165°F. You will note that there is not a significant difference in timing between the breast of a 20-pound bird and that of a 14 pounder. Timing is more dependent on the thickness of the meat than its total weight.



A 20-lb. turkey

Breast, fully trimmed,
unstuffed: 2½ to 2¾ hours
Add about 20 minutes
more for a stuffed breast
Leg-thighs, 1¾ to 2 hours

A 14-lb. turkey

Breast, fully trimmed,
unstuffed, 1¾ to 2 hours
Add about 20 minutes
more for a stuffed breast
Leg-thighs about 1¾ hours

The Re-assembled Roast Turkey

When you dis-assemble a turkey, you can roast the breast alone on its stuffing while the leg-thighs, which cook faster, take their own time in their own pan. Again, roasting in pieces takes half the time as roasting a whole bird, and when you re-assemble it, as you see here on its platter, who would ever know? Just lift off the legs and start carving.

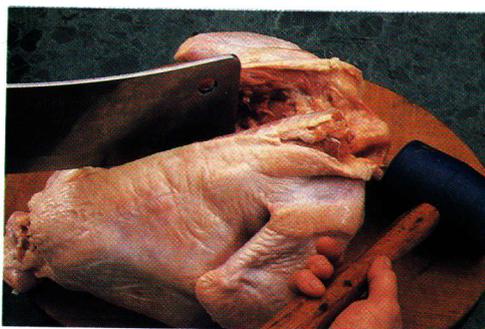
You can ask your market to do the dis-assembly for you, but it is not much of a problem for the home butcher.

Suggested equipment for the home butcher. A cleaver or hatchet; a pounding instrument is useful, like a plumber's rubber hammer; a baking sheet with at least 1 rimless side, of a size to fit into your roasting pan or several thicknesses of heavy-duty foil—so that the breast with stuffing can be slid off for serving.

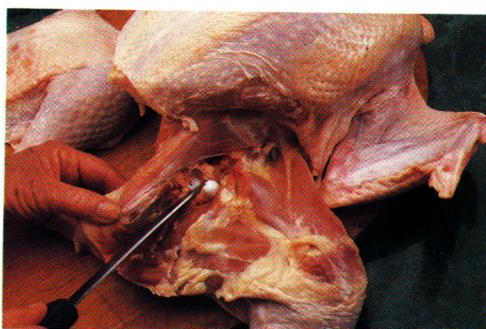
Removing the backbone. Chop down each side of the backbone, to remove it completely (see illustration, step 1). Chop it into 2-inch lengths, and it is ready for your turkey stock.

The leg-thighs. The thigh bone will still be attached to the backbone, where you see the point of the knife in the photograph. Scraping any meat free above and below the joint, cut through it to free the thigh with leg (drumstick) attached, step 2.

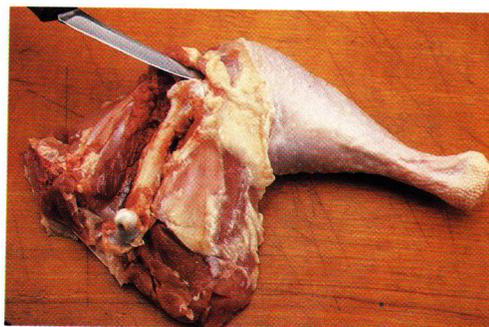
Boning the thigh. The thigh (or second joint) is easy to cut into neat slices once the bone is out, as you can



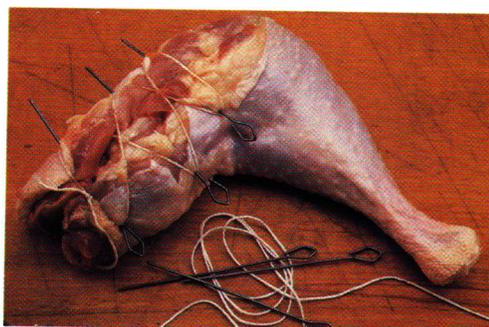
1. Removing the backbone



2. Removing the leg-thigh



3. Boning the thigh



4. Trussing the thigh

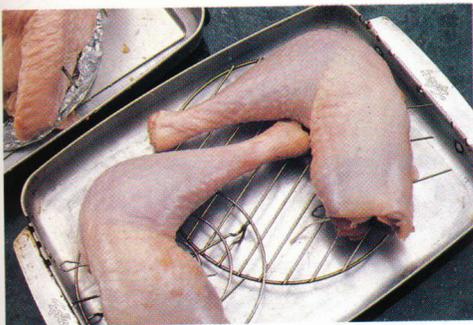
see in photo 10 at far right in the carving directions. You want to remove the thigh bone, but keep the thigh meat attached to the drumstick. To do so, cut and scrape around it to expose the ball joint at the knee (where you see the point of the knife). Cut through the joint but do not separate the flesh, and the bone is free, step 3; add it to your turkey stock.

Trussing the thigh. Season the interior of the thigh meat with salt, pepper, and sage. Truss it closed with skewers and string, step 4; massage it all over with oil.

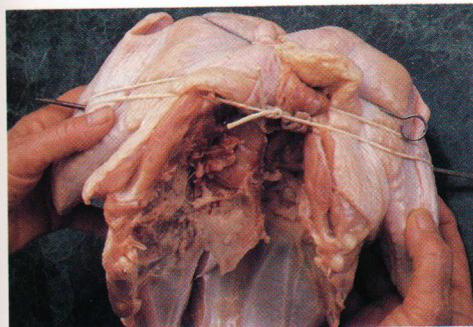
Leg-thighs ready to roast. Arrange the leg-thighs on a rack in a separate pan, step 5, at right: they take less time to roast than the breast. Cover and refrigerate them if you are not proceeding shortly.

Trussing the breast. Cut out the wish-bone from inside the neck cavity, as illustrated for roast chicken, step 1, page 162. Chop off the elbow nubbins and any extraneous bits. Skewer the neck skin to the back, and truss the wings to the body by pushing a long skewer through them and securing it with string, step 6. Cover and refrigerate the breast if you are not proceeding soon.

Mounding the breast on the stuffing. Shortly before roasting, rub the breast inside and out with oil; season it lightly with salt, pepper, and sage. You may roast it as is, but if you want it on a stuffing, where it will pick up flavor, mound the stuffing on its separate sheet, step 7, set in your roasting pan; then push the breast down onto the stuffing.



5. Leg-thighs in pan ready to roast



6. Trussing wings to breast



7. Mounding the breast on the stuffing



8. Breast ready for the oven

Ready to roast. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Surround the turkey stuffing with a double strip of oiled foil, step 8, at lower left.

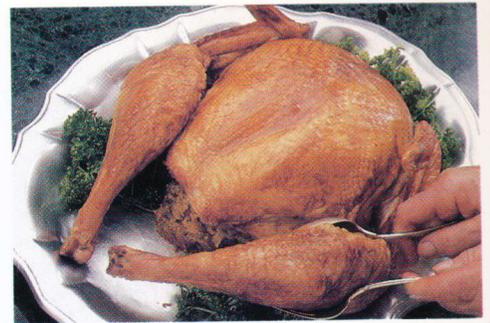
Roasting the dis-assembled turkey. Roast the breast and the legs as you would a whole turkey (page 168), basting with oil, then accumulated juices, every 20 to 30 minutes; the last hour, surround the breast with a cup each of chopped carrots and onions to flavor the juices. The breast of this 14-pound turkey will take 1¾ to 2 hours to reach 165°F on your meat thermometer; the legs about 1¼ hours. See the box on page 168 for comments on timing.

Re-assembling and presentation. To present the bird, slide the turkey breast, on its bed of stuffing, onto the platter or carving board. Remove all skewers and strings, and arrange the legs in their rightful place, step 9.

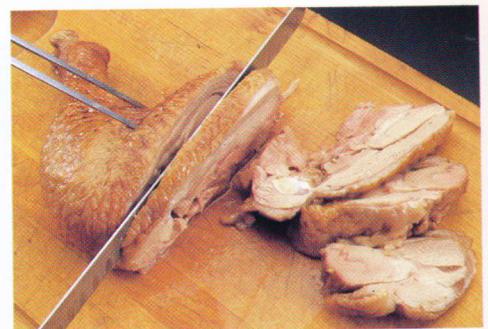
Slicing the thigh. Simply pick up one of the legs, and start slicing the thigh (second joint) crosswise like a sausage, making medallions about ¼ inch thick, step 10. Slice the drumstick lengthwise, in the usual awkward way. (If the turkey people would remove those drumstick tendons—and they easily could—the drumstick would come into its own.)

Removing the wing. Protecting your fingers with a napkin, grab the wing by its elbow. Cut around it where it joins the shoulder; then, bending it forward to loosen it, cut through the ball joint at the shoulder to remove the wing, step 11.

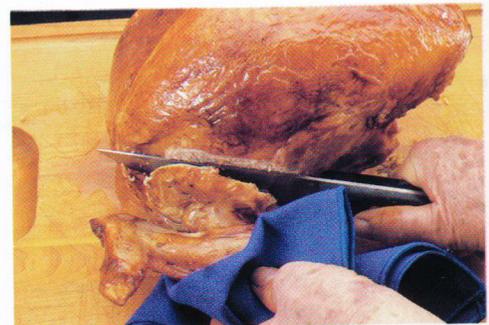
Slicing the breast. Now start slicing the breast from the front end, gradually angling your knife parallel to the breastbone as you proceed, step 12.



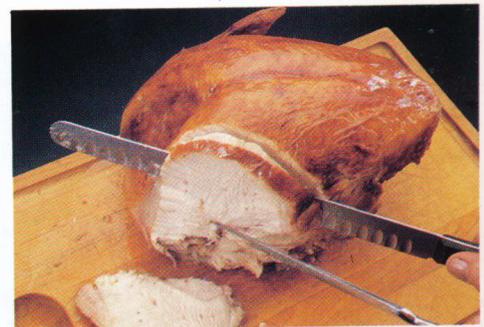
9. Re-assembling and presentation



10. Carving the boned thigh



11. Removing a wing



12. Slicing the breast

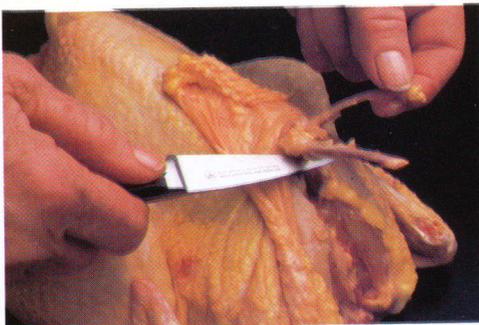
To Truss a Chicken

The Wishbone. Remove the giblets and fat from inside the cavity, then wash and dry both chicken and giblets (I use hot water!). Now, to make for easier carving of the breast meat, cut out the wishbone from inside the neck cavity, as shown (see illustration, step 1). Thread your needle and begin trussing. (You'll note that in all the instructions for beasts and birds I speak of knees, armpits, elbows, etc., since I find it easier to understand the parts when one realizes they are built essentially just like us, with rib cages, backbones, necks, and so forth.)

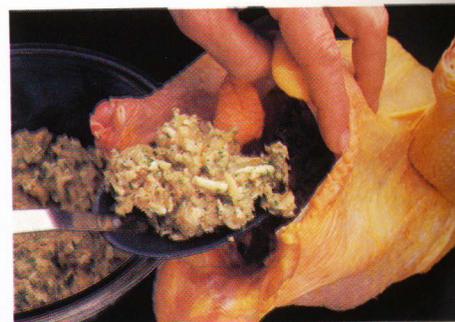
First Thrust. Lift up the drumstick ends, then push the knees under the armpits at the shoulder end. While one hand holds the legs up, push the needle through the flesh under one knee and through carcass, step 2; draw the needle out under the opposite knee. (Leave a 5-inch length of string at your point of entry under the first knee.)

Turn the chicken breast down. Fold the wings akimbo, tucking the wing ends under the shoulders as shown here. Then, on the same side of the chicken where you came out from the second knee, poke the needle through the upper arm of the wing, catch the neck skin, if there, and pin it to the backbone, and come out through the second wing, step 3.

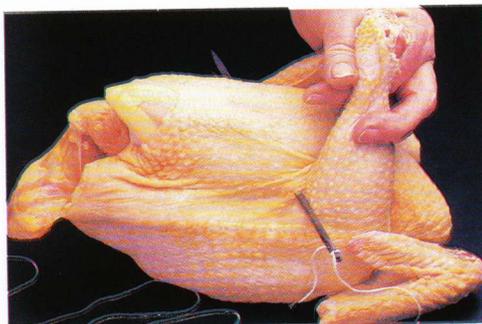
Tie #1. You now have two string ends on the same side of the chicken: the loose end you left behind when you first went under the first knee and the end where you come out at the wing. Turn the chicken on its back, pull the two ends tight, and tie, step 4.



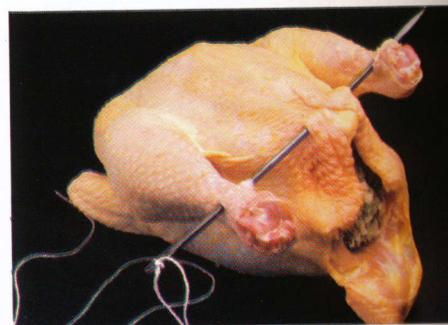
1. Removing the wishbone



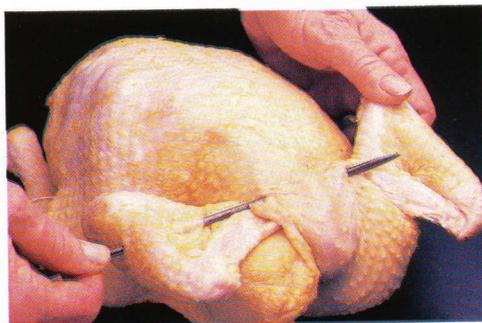
5. In goes the stuffing.



2. FIRST THRUST. Pushing needle through carcass under the knee



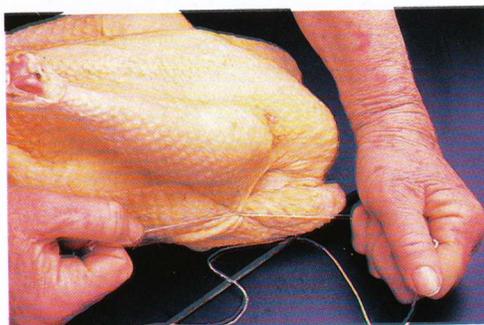
6. Going through drumstick ends and tip of breastbone



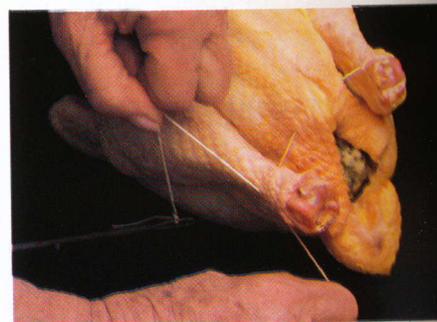
3. CONTINUATION. Going through wings



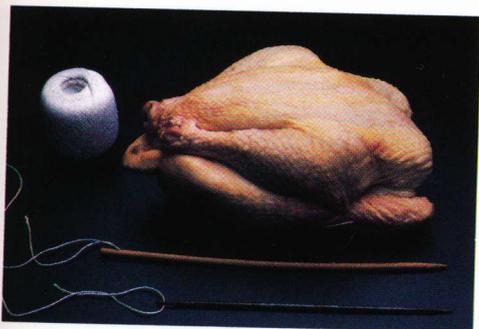
7. The string has gone through tailpiece.



4. TIE #1



8. Final tie to close cavity



9. The well-trussed chicken

Stuffing. The chicken may be roasted with or without a stuffing. If it's not to be stuffed, sprinkle a big pinch of salt inside the cavity, a little pepper, and perhaps an herb such as thyme or tarragon; you may also want to tuck in the liver. A collection of stuffings starts on page 184; the rice and giblet recipe on page 185 is one of my favorites for a large roaster.

Tie #2. Now you want to close the cavity, which will be automatic when you truss the drumstick ends against the breast. To do so, push the needle through the end of one of the drumsticks, through the tip end of the breastbone, and out through the end of the other drumstick, leaving a 5-inch length of string at the side you entered, step 6.

Then, on the same side where you came out the drumstick end, push your needle through the underside of the tailpiece. The string has now encircled this whole critical area, which needs but one final tie, step 7.

When you pull the two ends of the string tight, you have closed the barn door, so to speak—the stuffing is held in place, and the legs are nicely secured, step 8. The chicken is ready for its butter massage and its roasting, step 9.

 MASTER RECIPE

To Roast a Large Chicken or Capon

For 6 to 8 servings

A 5½- to 7-pound roaster-chicken or capon, prepared and trussed as described in the preceding directions (cavity either salted and peppered, or filled with 2½ cups stuffing; see list, page 184)

**1 Tbs softened butter, or oil
Salt**

To flavor the roasting juices

**1 medium carrot, chopped
1 onion, chopped**

**Ingredients for a deglazing sauce
(shallots, stock, wine, and
optional butter, page 138)**

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT SUGGESTED:

A roasting pan about 2 inches deep and just large enough to hold the chicken; a rack for the pan; a basting brush

Preliminaries. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Massage the chicken skin all over with the soft butter or oil, and place breast-up on the rack in the roasting pan.

Roasting. Count on 2 to 2½ hours in all—1½ to 2 hours for roasting and a 20-minute rest before carving. Open and close the oven quickly while basting, so as not to cool it down.

Start. Set the chicken breast-up in the pan, on the lower middle rack of the preheated oven.

SMOKE NOTE: *After 10 to 15 minutes of roasting, fat dripping into the pan may begin to burn and smoke. Pour in a ¼-inch layer of water, and the smoking will cease.*

Minute 10. Turn the chicken on one side (trussing strings give you a grip). Salt that side very lightly.

Minute 20. Baste with accumulated fat; turn the chicken on its other side.

Minute 30. Lower thermostat to 350°F. Baste again, always rapidly.

Minute 40. Baste again.

Minute 50. Baste again. Salt lightly, turn the chicken on its other side, and strew the vegetables around.

Minute 60. Baste again.

Minute 70 to finish. Turn the chicken breast-up, salt, and baste; baste once or twice again until the chicken is done.

When is it done? The thighs are tender when pressed; the legs move quite easily up and down in their sockets; when the chicken is lifted and drained, the last juices to drop from the vent are clear yellow.

Remove the chicken to a board and let it rest 20 minutes before carving, so that the juices will retreat back into the flesh. Meanwhile make the quick and delicious little deglazing sauce to moisten each serving, as described on page 138.

HIGH-TEMPERATURE ROASTING. *See discussion in the roast turkey section on page 168.*

 MASTER RECIPE

The Traditional Roast Turkey

Moderate heat makes for a nice brown bird and tender juicy meat. You also have easy and complete control over the roasting, as well as beautiful juices for your gravy.

Roasting the turkey. Preheat the oven to 325°F. When you are ready to roast, place the prepared turkey in the lower third level. Baste with oil or the accumulated pan juices every 30 to 40 minutes. It's no more complicated than that, as long as you keep an eye on how things are going.

During the roasting. If the turkey starts to brown too much, cover loosely with a sheet of foil, shiny side up, step 6. An hour or more before the end of the estimated roasting time (see chart following), scatter the chopped vegetables into the juices in the pan.



6. Cover loosely with foil if turkey browns too much.

Remove the turkey to a carving board or hot platter and cover loosely with a sheet of foil. While the turkey is resting, make the gravy.

Gravy. Several methods for making gravy start on page 173—take your choice. The giblet recipe is particularly good with a plain roast turkey.

Carving. Carve the turkey as you would the big chicken, on page 164. First remove the leg-thigh and then the wing on one side. The wing makes one serving. For the legs, cut through the ball joint at the knee, separating the drumstick from the second joint; make 2 or 3 lengthwise slices from the drumstick, and several more from the second joint. Start slicing the breast from the front end, gradually angling your knife parallel to the breastbone as illustrated for the re-assembled turkey, photo 12, on page 171. Or carve off the breast half in one piece, and cut into slanting crosswise slices, as illustrated for the goose on page 176.

Turkey Stock for Gravy

Either make a simple stock by simmering the backbone pieces, gizzard, neck, and any scraps in lightly salted water, or choose the more elaborate brown turkey stock on page 173, where the bones and aromatic vegetables are browned before simmering.

SPECIAL NOTE

Estimated Roasting Times at 325°F

NOTE: A chunky big-breasted turkey will take a little longer per pound than the longer thinner type, and an unstuffed bird takes 20 to 30 minutes less time, overall, than a stuffed one. To the timing estimates, always add an additional half-hour rest out of the oven before carving; this allows the juices to retreat back into the flesh, giving juicy meat. Since even a 14-pound turkey takes over an hour to cool down to tepid, allow yourself plenty of time.

12 to 16 pounds—about 4 hours to roast

16 to 20 pounds—about 5 hours to roast

20 to 26 pounds—about 6 hours to roast

When is it done? Whatever your timing charts and thermometers may say, no turkey is done if there are no brown juices along with the fat in the bottom of the roasting pan—you should have about a cup of juice. When you feel your turkey is done, check the temperature: insert an instant meat thermometer into the thickest part of the breast meat near the armpit area, testing several areas and both sides. It should register between 162°F and 170°F—the higher temperature if you like the meat fairly well done. The thickest part of the drumsticks should feel fairly tender when pressed, and the drumsticks should move slightly in their hip sockets.