

Turkey Tips



Most people think the Thanksgiving turkey dinner is the most intimidating meal to make. I never understood that.

For Thanksgiving, there was always a crowd at my childhood home. At least a dozen people, often more. My mother would get the biggest turkey she could buy, probably 25# or so. It would barely fit in the oven, (and of course there was only one oven).

Sides would be baked acorn squash and boiled green beans. Baked potatoes would be wedged in the oven around the turkey. There'd be a fruit plate and pies purchased at the local baker. Nothing too fancy, but the day still felt like a celebration.

My mother taught me, by example, not to be intimidated by such a big dinner. I just saw it as normal.

So, I'm always entertained when I see and hear all the ruckus about the Thanksgiving meal – everyone debating how to cook their turkey, what gourmet sides to offer along with the venerable green bean casserole, and whatever happened to Grandma's pumpkin pie recipe!

Today I'm going to focus on a few Turkey Tips I found that might shed some light on elements of the controversy. My goal is to

lessen the hassle and worry.

It starts even before the turkey hits the oven.

Don't Rinse It

That's right. The USDA now says more and more people are getting food poisoning from rinsing the turkey. That's because when you rinse the turkey, little water droplets hit the turkey, splash off, and end up on your hands, apron, and all over your kitchen. So don't risk it. Cook your turkey to 165 degrees and all chance of food poisoning from the turkey will be gone. If something on your turkey looks gross and you feel you have to rinse it, be VERY careful. I just dry mine off with a paper towel these days. During the week, I dry my chicken this way, too.


Opening the Oven to Peek is Okay

I've seen people yelling at each other in the kitchen to keep the oven door closed. No peeking. It was assumed that every time you open the oven door the temperature goes down considerably and affects how juicy your turkey finishes. Truth is the temperature does go down a smidge, but not enough to really worry about. All it does is add a little time to the cooking of the turkey. 15 minutes per pound for an unstuffed turkey is the normal gauge. If you use a meat thermometer, peek toward the end of the cooking time is to see if the turkey has hit 165 degrees. Then it's done. Let it rest 30 minutes while you finish up the sides. That's what encourages your turkey to be juicy.

No Basting Necessary

Holy bird! No basting? We thought that's how a turkey got moist and tender. The fact is, the turkey will do that all by itself. If you want your turkey skin to taste crispy orange, baste it

with orange juice. You want your gravy to have an extra buttery taste? You can baste your bird, but it's not necessary. If you'd rather spend that time watching the big football game, go for it. And then you won't be opening the oven as much, either.

If you want more, there's a book I'd recommend. The Perfect Turkey  by Chef Keith Sarasin. You can find it at World Market, Barnes and Noble, or online. His book has all the ins and outs of turkey cooking methodologies and it's got over 100 recipes for sides and things in case you want a fancier dinner than my mother made, or you want to venture beyond the green bean casserole.

Enjoy Your Holiday!

Cheers,





Green Bean Casserole

Just like grandma used to make...but healthier!