

How big a bird should you buy?

The recommended portion is 1 pound of uncooked turkey per adult. If you want leftovers or are feeding teenage boys, plan for 1 ½ lbs. per person. Consider buying two or more smaller birds instead of one large bird. This can cut down the cooking time as well as provide more drumsticks!

How long does thawing take?

USDA recommends keeping the turkey cold, i.e., in the fridge or a cooler, to slowly thaw, either on a tray or "cupping" the bottom of the bird in foil to prevent accidental drips. The rule of thumb is 24 hours thawing per 5 lbs. of bird. Check occasionally to be sure it is really thawing. A thawed bird in the original wrapping is OK in the refrigerator for several days but optimally should be cooked within four days after thawing.



How should a Bourbon Red turkey be cooked?

There's no trick to preparing one of these heritage gems. They do have less fat so cooking at a low temperature, with moist heat at least part of the time, is a common approach. A good meat thermometer is helpful for cooking your heritage turkey to perfection.

Many veteran cooks cut their heritage birds into pieces before roasting. This allows dark and white meat to be cooked to the correct degree of doneness (dark to 180°F, white to 140°). Consider cooking your first heritage turkey with minimal seasoning including salt, adding additional as desired at the table. That way you learn what the birds really bring to the table. Add stronger seasonings the next time, if you wish.

The essence of a free-range heritage turkey is its flavor. No industrial bird can tickle so many taste buds or provide the satisfying savor found in each bite of these throwbacks. That the meat is firm and has recognizable aroma and texture will come as a surprise to those who have eaten only the bland turkey designed for mass consumption. Note, however, the eater may invest a bit more time and energy chewing heritage turkey. These turkeys are not tough. They are firm. You eat slower and may be satisfied with a smaller amount.