

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### In a Rush? Spatchcock the Turkey

Not sure about spatchcocking anything? It seems to be the hot new cooking method of the year. We've had deep fried turkey, slow roasted, hot roasted, brined, marinated and more. Now spatchcocking has hit the cooking magazines and celebrity chef shows. And once you see it, you'll understand why it could save you a lot of time.

Don't feel bad if you don't know what spatchcocking is! And don't expect that you'll need a lot of extra kitchen equipment to do it. Spatchcocking is just a way of cutting the bird, one step short of butterflying it. To spatchcock a chicken or a turkey, all you need is a good set of heavy kitchen shears. You turn the bird breast down, and cut out the backbone. Just cut through the ribs on either side and remove the spine. (Save it to make broth for gravy!)

Then you turn the bird over and push down really hard on the breastbone until the breast flattens out. The drumsticks will be splayed out on either side. One set of website directions says that you'll need a stool to stand on while you push down. The extra height gives you more leverage to push.

If you wanted to go the whole way and butterfly the turkey you'd cut out the breast bone too. Then you can really flatten it out. But spatchcocking makes it so flat it won't take nearly as long to roast. The breast is not so much thicker than the thighs. That means it won't get so dried out while the thighs finish cooking. You season it as you would a whole turkey, whatever your family likes.

Roasting a flattened, spatchcocked turkey, 12 pounds, will only take 70 to 90 minutes in a 450° F oven. That's only 6 to 8 minutes per pound, about half the 15 minutes per pound in a 325° F oven which are the usual recommendations. For a busy cook with guests coming, that could be a game-changer! Of course, a larger bird will take longer. Doing a chicken this way will take a lot less time.

Most directions for roasting the bird seem to be trying to shorten the roasting time as much as possible, by using the hottest temperature of the oven. If you choose to use a lower temperature so that you can have a couple of other dishes cooking at the same time, then roasting the bird will also take longer.

The most important part of this technique is knowing when the bird is done before it's overdone. For that you really need a meat thermometer. It can have a dial or be digital, as long as it works. To be safe turkey needs to reach 165° F in the inside of the thickest parts of the meat. That will make sure there are no Salmonella left to ruin the party.

So, when you think the bird is getting toward the end of the cooking time, stick the thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh. Don't let the tip touch the bones. Wait until the needle stops moving on the dial, or the numbers stop changing on a digital. If it's not up to 160° F put it back in the oven! If it reads 160° F take it out of the oven and tent it loosely with foil. Leave it sit for 10 minutes. The temperature will continue to rise, and the juices will stabilize in the meat.

After 10 minutes (or more if you're not ready for the guests just yet) get out the sharpened knife and carve away! The meat should be moist and tender, not overdone, dried and tough. And while a flattened out bird is not what we usually picture when we think of a turkey dinner, you'll be able to sit back and enjoy the extra time you've had to visit with your guests!

After that speed cooking, here's a speedy way to use the leftover turkey for lunch or dinner the next day. If you don't want sherry, use broth or water. Enjoy!

#### Quick Turkey a la King

1 Tbsp margarine or oil	½ C chopped onion
1 (10 oz) can low sodium cream of mushroom soup	pinch of pepper
8 oz Neufchatel cheese (reduced fat cream cheese)	2 C chopped cooked turkey
1 (3 oz) can sliced mushrooms, drained	¼ C diced green pepper
2 Tbsp chopped pimento	2 Tbsp dry sherry
4 hot baked biscuits	

Melt margarine in saucepan. Add onions, cook until tender. Stir in soup, cheese and pepper. Add turkey and mushrooms, mix well. Bring to boil. Stir in green pepper, pimentos and sherry. Stir and heat until hot throughout. Divide over biscuits on 4 serving plates. Serves 4.

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