

# Turkey Nutrition Information

Nov 30, 2009 | By Frank Whittemore

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Photo Caption Turkey is high in tryptophan Photo Credit Image by Flickr.com, courtesy of James

Turkey is a lean white meat, traditionally served as a whole roasted bird at Thanksgiving or Christmas gatherings. Turkey isn't just for holidays though, and can be enjoyed any day as a whole bird, or as breasts, cutlets, tenderloins or even ground. Its versatility makes it an excellent, healthful and nutritious alternative to chicken, pork or beef in a variety of dishes.

## History

Turkeys are indigenous to North America and have been a long time traditional food of Native Americans. They were eventually brought to Europe by Christopher Columbus. Turkeys were soon domesticated both in North America and Europe. Turkey is now grown widely in the United States, Canada, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Today, billions of pounds of turkey are produced every year.

## Contents

Per 100g serving, turkey provides 160 calories with 72 calories coming from fat. It delivers 20g of proteins, 8g of fat and no carbohydrates. The same serving size also provides the vitamins niacin, B6, B12, pantothenic acid, and riboflavin. Turkey also contains the minerals iron, phosphorus, potassium, zinc and is particularly rich in selenium.

## Benefits

Turkey is a relatively inexpensive source of protein, with more protein per gram than both chicken and beef, while remaining lower in fat and cholesterol than other meats. It also delivers vitamins and minerals, especially niacin, which facilitates the conversion of food into available energy, and Vitamin B6, which is important for the health of the nervous system. Turkey also has selenium, which is essential for proper thyroid and immune function.

## Misconceptions

Turkey is also a natural source of tryptophan, an amino acid. Because tryptophan is a precursor to serotonin, a brain chemical that is associated with relaxation and sleep, it was wrongly concluded that turkey would make you sleepy. However, the amount of tryptophan in a single serving is not enough to produce sleepiness. It is more likely that the high amount of carbohydrates consumed at traditional turkey dinners is to blame.

## Safe Handling

Turkey meat should be kept refrigerated until ready to use. Turkey should have a fresh smell, free from foul or off odors. Uncooked turkey meat can carry salmonella and other food-borne diseases. Do not prepare other food items where turkey has been prepared to avoid cross contamination. Thaw turkey in the refrigerator and cook it to an internal temperature of 165 degrees.