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Turkey Tips

How to debone/cut up a fresh or thawed turkey & recipes from the parts:

Steps to cutting a fresh or thawed turkey:

1. Remove the leg by pulling the leg and thigh away from the breast and cutting through the skin and flesh toward the thigh joint using a rigid boning knife.
2. Cut down to the thigh joint, twist the leg to break the joint and cut the thigh and leg from the carcass. Be careful to trim around the meat near the backbone; leave it attached to the thigh. Repeat with the other leg.
3. To split the breast:
    1. Square up the turkey by placing it on its back and pressing on its legs and breast to create a more uniform appearance.
    2. Place the turkey on its breast and hold the tail tightly with the thumb and forefinger of one hand. Using a rigid boning knife in a single swift motion, cut along the backbone from the turkey's tail to the head.
    3. Lay the turkey flat on the cutting board and remove the backbone by cutting through the ribs connecting it to the breast using a chef's knife.
    4. Bend the turkey's back, breaking the breast-bone free.
    5. Run your fingers along the breastbone to separate the breast meat from the bone, pulling the bone free and removing all the flexible cartilage.
    6. Cut through the skin to separate the bird into 2 halves.
4. The breast is now cut into 4 quarters.
5. To cut the bird into 6 pieces, separate the thigh from the leg by making a cut along the line of fat on the inside of the thigh and leg.
6. To cut the bird into 8 pieces, separate the wing from the breast by cutting the joint, or split the breast, leaving a portion of the breast meat attached to the wing.

Steps to preparing a boneless breast:

1. After removing the legs and backbone, bend the turkey back, breaking the bone free.
2. Run your fingers along the breastbone to separate the breast meat from the bone, pulling the bone free and removing all the flexible cartilage.
3. With the breast lying skin side down, separate the rib bones, wing, and wishbone. Leave the 2 tender pieces attached. Repeat the procedure on the other side, making sure to remove the small wishbone pieces from the front of the breast.

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Steps to boning a turkey leg and thigh:

1. Carefully cut through the skin, meat and tendons at the base of the leg. Be sure to cut through the bone.
2. Pull the skin off the leg with your hand, then break the joint between the leg and thigh. Twist and pull out the leg bone.
3. Working from the inside of the thigh bone, separate the bone from the meat.
4. Cut around the cartilage at the joint between the leg and thigh and remove the thigh bone and cartilage

Check out the recipes below on our website to see how to use these parts!

- Turkey Stew with Almonds & Peanuts
- Turkey with Beans
- Turkey Soup (with canned veggies)
- Turkey Fingers
- Turkey Milanese (with potatoes & plantains)

Source: Chef Carolina, Share Your Foodways
On Cooking by Sarah Labensky, Alan Hause & Priscilla Martel