



## < About Bread Stuffings

Is there a difference between stuffing and dressing? Some say not, but here we will refer to **stuffing** as anything cooked in the bird, meat, or fish; and **dressing** as that cooked separately in a baking dish. The big difference worth mentioning is that we do not recommend using eggs in stuffing, but we do use them in dressing to bind the ingredients. ► We also caution you to cook pork for stuffings or dressings. ► Stuffing is cooked when it reaches an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F). ► Allow approximately ½ cup stuffing for each pound (500 g) of raw bird or fish. ► Serving size is about ¾ cup per person.

When bread crumbs are called for in a recipe, we recommend using day-old bread, whether Italian or French bread, homemade white bread, whole wheat, or corn bread. Whatever the bread, if it is stale and/or toasted, a dry, firm stuffing results. If it is fresh and not toasted, the stuffing will be moist and dense.

The quality of the crumbs used is very important, so check to differentiate between fresh and dry. ► Never grind bread to make crumbs, as the stuffing will be too compact. Plain unseasoned packaged bread crumbs or bread cubes can be used in any recipe that calls for fresh. ► If you use them, increase the stock called for in the recipe by one-third. ► A 450-grams loaf of bread yields about 10 cups of fresh bread cubes or 6 cups fresh bread crumbs, including the crust, which should be used unless otherwise specified in the recipe.

If you prefer a dry stuffing, add only as much stock as will enable the bread to barely stick together when firmly grasped in the hand. For a moister texture, add enough melted butter so that the bread holds together readily when pressed. In many of the recipes that follow, a reduction in the amount of butter is given with an increase in stock or broth for the benefit of those who want to add more moisture but not fat.

If made in advance, ► stuffings can be refrigerated up to one day but should be stored separately from the meat, poultry, or fish. To take off the chill, remove the stuffing from the refrigerator about 20 minutes before using, or preheat the stuffing until lukewarm over low heat or in a 149°C (300°F) oven. It is important, too, ► to stuff food just before cooking; ► to mix, stir, and pack stuffings lightly so as not to compact them; and ► to allow space when stuffing, so the mixture can expand and stay light. Should there be extra stuffing that does not fit in the cavity of the fish, fowl, or meat, cook it separately in a greased baking dish. If the bird is done before the stuffing, remove the bird from the oven, scoop the stuffing into a buttered casserole, and continue to bake it in the hot oven while the bird rests.

**Dressing baked in a dish** can be assembled ahead and go directly from the refrigerator to the oven. To bake dressing, spread it in a layer 5 to 8 cm deep in a large buttered baking dish. Ladle over the top 120 ml stock, broth, or milk for every 4 to 5 cups of bread stuffing. ► For a softer dressing, cover with aluminum foil; for a crispy brown crust, dot the top with butter and bake uncovered. For either, bake in a preheated 177°C (350°F) oven for 30 to 45 minutes. When baking the dressing and meat, fish, or poultry at the same time, occasionally baste the dressing with the pan drippings.

Remove all the stuffing before carving. For instructions on preparing a bird for stuffing, see About Stuffing and Trussing Poultry.

