

Chronicle Classic: Best Way Brined Turkey

Serves 6-8, with leftovers

Several years ago, we roasted nearly 40 turkeys in our test kitchen and found a brined turkey to be the best. Every year since, we've retested the recipe. It's still our favorite.

Brine time: 12-24 hours

Active time: 40 minutes

Cook time: 2-2¼ hours

1 turkey, about 12 pounds

Brine:

1 cup sugar

1½ to 1¾ cups kosher salt

2½ gallons cold water

2 bay leaves, torn into pieces

1 bunch fresh thyme

1 head of garlic, cloves separated and peeled

5 whole allspice berries, crushed

4 juniper berries, smashed (see Note)

Roasting:

2 tablespoons softened butter + butter for basting

1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

½ cup chicken stock plus more as needed

Instructions: Remove giblet bag from turkey, along with any extra internal fat and pin feathers. Rinse well under cold tap water. Combine sugar, salt and 3-4 quarts of water in a large bowl. Stir until sugar and salt dissolve. Add remaining brine ingredients except for the remaining 1½-1¾ gallons water. Double-bag two heavy-duty, unscented trash bags (not made of recycled materials), then put them in an ice chest that is large enough to hold the turkey. Place turkey in bags, pour in brine and remaining 1½-1¾ gallons water – there should be enough liquid to completely cover the bird. Press

out air in bags; tightly close each bag separately. Keep turkey cold by piling bags of ice over and around the closed bags which will also help keep the turkey submerged. Brine for 12-24 hours.

Alternative method: Place turkey and brine in a large pan. Refrigerate for 12-24 hours. If turkey floats to top, weight it down with a plate and cans to keep it submerged in brine.

Roasting: Preheat oven to 400°. Remove turkey from brine, rinse and dry well. Spread 2 tablespoons softened butter over skin. Sprinkle pepper over skin and

in cavity. Tuck wing tips under, loosely truss legs and place turkey on a V-shaped rack in a roasting pan. Tent breast with foil.

Put turkey in oven.

To assure that the bird cooks evenly, rotate roasting pan 180° every 30 minutes while turkey is roasting. Roast for about 1 hour, remove foil and baste turkey with ½ cup stock. Return to oven and roast, basting with pan drippings every 20 minutes, using more stock as needed. Start checking internal temperature after about 1 hour of roasting time. If legs

begin to get too brown, cover loosely with foil. Roast turkey until internal thigh temperature reaches 165°. Total roasting time should be about 2-2¼ hours. Let bird rest for at least 20-30 minutes before carving.

Note: Juniper berries are available in the spice section of some supermarkets and specialty grocers.

Nutrition information: The calories and other nutrients absorbed from brines vary and are difficult to estimate. Therefore, this recipe contains no analysis.

