



### Turkey Preparations

*There are as many ways to roast a turkey as there are grandmothers to teach us their cooking secrets. Everyone seems to have their favorite method for turkey, and while we do not zealously advocate one over another, we are partial to the high-heat roasting method, which produces a crisp and brown exterior without cooking the bird so long it dries out. To ensure a moist bird, buy a kosher turkey, which has been salted to draw out the blood. Otherwise, use a brining technique to ensure a moist bird. Below is one of our favorite brine mixes, which you can use for any kind of meat.*

### Fruit and Spice Brine Mix

#### Ingredients

*For the fruit and spice brining mix (makes about 3 cups):*

1 cup sea salt  
¾ cup sugar  
3 or 4 star anise  
1 tablespoon whole black or pink peppercorns  
6-8 cardamom pods  
1 tablespoon dried orange peel  
1 tablespoon dried lemon peel  
2 tablespoons dried rosemary

8 cups water  
8 cups apple cider or water

Combine all dry ingredients and mix well. This brine mix will keep indefinitely in a plastic bag. To brine a 15 lb. turkey, use the whole recipe above. Add the brine mixture to 8 cups water in a large pot and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve completely. Remove from the heat and allow to cool completely. It should be cold before you immerse the turkey.

In a tub or bucket large enough to hold your turkey and copious amounts of liquid, combine the brine solution with 8 cups of water or apple cider. Carefully submerge the turkey in the brining solution, making sure not to spillover. (Chef Mark has learned the hard way that large birds displace a lot of liquid).

Cover and refrigerate for 6-12 hours, turning the turkey halfway through the brining time.

Before roasting the bird, remove it from the solution and rinse it thoroughly with cold water. A chef friend of ours says "I don't mean a little spritz! Wash that bird thoroughly for a couple of minutes and pat dry thoroughly with paper towels."

*[Chef's Note: For brining smaller amounts of meat, up to 5 lbs., use only ¾ cup of the dry mix and reduce the proportions of water and apple cider by half. If you're short on time, you can make a very simple brine with just salt, sugar and water. The salt opens the pores of the bird and allows the moisture to be drawn in. The sugar is hydrophilic and helps to keep the moisture in the bird.]*

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## High-Heat Roasting Method

### Ingredients

1 turkey, 8-12 lbs.  
Salt (if not using the brining method above)  
4-5 tablespoons melted unsalted butter (or compound butter - see variations below)  
1 large onion, roughly chopped  
1 orange, cut into wedges

*[Chef's Note: This method is great for achieving a nicely browned bird with a crisp skin and moist breast meat. You should use a relatively small bird, since it requires flipping the bird. Well, you know what we mean...]*

*As much as we love stuffing, we generally don't cook the stuffing inside the bird. In addition to the food safety concerns, it's just too much trouble for us. We prefer to stuff the cavity with onions and orange wedges, which help to keep in moisture and flavor.]*

### Equipment

Heavy-bottomed non-stick roasting pan

### Preparation

Place a rack on the lowest level of the oven and preheat the oven to 425° F. Thoroughly dry the turkey with paper towels, and if you haven't brined it, or you're not using a kosher turkey, generously rub the body and interior cavities with salt, then brush with the melted butter. Place the chopped onions and orange wedges inside the cavity.

Place the turkey on one side, with the drumstick sticking up. If necessary, use onions or balls of aluminum foil to help keep the bird on its side. Roast it at 425° for 30 minutes, then remove and carefully turn on its other side. You can use bunched up paper towels to help you grasp the hot bird, and keep your potholders clean.

Baste the newly exposed side with the butter and pan drippings, then return to the oven and roast for 30 minutes more. Repeat this process so that the bird roasts on each side twice, for a total of 2 hours. Turn the bird with the breast facing up and baste once more, roasting until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reaches 165° F.

*[Chef's Note: Food safety requires that the bird reach 165° F for a couple of minutes to be sure that any harmful bacteria is killed, but if you leave the turkey in the oven until it reaches this point, the carryover cooking time may take it well above this temperature, and dry out the breast meat. You can remove the bird when it has reached 155-160° F.]*

*Important note! The pop-up timers that come with most turkeys will cook the meat to oblivion to ensure no one is going to file a lawsuit for an undercooked bird, resulting in cardboard-flavored turkey. Trust your instant-read thermometer above all!]*

Remove the turkey from the oven, loosely tent with foil, and allow to rest for 20-30 minutes before carving. You can prepare your favorite gravy with the pan drippings.

### Variations

#### Sage Butter

1 stick of unsalted butter, softened  
2 tablespoons fresh sage leaves, finely minced

Finely mince the fresh sage leaves and combine with the softened butter until thoroughly combined. Lay a sheet of cling wrap on the counter, and scrape out the sage butter onto it. Wrapping the cling wrap

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around the butter mixture, gently shape it into a log shape. Twist the ends of the cling wrap in opposite directions to enclose the log like a sausage. Place in the refrigerator until service to firm up.

*[Chef's Note: You may double or triple this recipe, and store the compound butter wrapped in plastic in the fridge or freezer for anytime you may want a tasty, buttery topping. You may also experiment with other variations, such as rosemary, thyme, or other herbs, or even blend the butter with blue cheese for another great steak topping.]*

You can use any fresh herbs, alone or in combination, mixed into a compound butter, and rubbed over the skin, or even placed underneath the skin before roasting. As you know, we are also partial to truffles, and if your budget allows, you can go all out and make a turkey "in mourning" by placing a veil of sliced black truffles underneath the skin. See how we did it with hens for [this recipe](#).

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