



Photo credit Jonathan Ross

Oven- Roasted Turkey

with Fresh Herbs and Apples

Brining the turkey before roasting truly makes all the difference. I like to start brining my turkey 1–2 days before Thanksgiving dinner, so it has plenty of time to marinate. The mix of salt, spices, and aromatics adds flavor to the meat, but it also helps create that golden crispy skin after roasting. A combination of fresh herbs, garlic, and apple cider (or apple juice) infuses flavor into the turkey, and the results are always amazing: juicy and tender, with just enough flavor to enhance the roasted turkey meat.

There are many ways to roast a turkey. I like to use a high, constant temperature, 400°F, on convection mode, and I use a meat thermometer with a continuous digital readout to make sure the temperature is increasing linearly. At this roasting temperature, you must take the turkey out of the oven below your desired cooking temperature. Because the outside is at such a high temperature, I have found that a 15° rise for a 17–19-pound bird is expected with this cooking style. That is, if you are going for 160°F at the core, remove it at 145°F, since the core will continue to cook out of the oven.

Ingredients

For the Brine

- 12 cups (2,800 ml) water
- 4 cups (950 ml) plain apple cider or unsweetened apple juice
- 1 cup (200 g) coarse kosher salt
- ½ cup (60 g) brown sugar
- 2 heads garlic
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 6 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 3 dried bay leaves

1 tablespoon (7 g) whole black peppercorns
1 teaspoon (5 g) red pepper flakes
½ teaspoon (0.4 g) dried sage

For the Roast

One brined turkey (we usually use an 18-pound [8 kg] turkey for 12 servings)
2–3 apples (to fill the bird cavity)
2–3 yellow onions (to fill the bird cavity)

special equipment:

3–5-gallon (11–19 L) stock pot
1 large bag of ice
1 large cooler (depending on the climate in which you live!)
1 or 2 meat thermometers

Instructions

1. _ In a large stock pot, combine all brining ingredients. Slice the garlic heads around the circumference before adding to the pot. Place over medium-high heat and boil until the salt and sugar have completely dissolved. Stir occasionally.
2. _ Once the salt and sugar have dissolved, remove from heat. Add the apple cider and mix. Let the brine come to room temperature and then chill in the refrigerator (or if you live in a colder climate, outside) until cold.
3. _ Once the brine is chilled, we can use it to brine the turkey. If your turkey is less than 18 pounds, it should fit in a 4- or 5-gallon (15–19 L) stockpot, and you can brine directly in the pot. Otherwise, you may need a brining bag and a large cooler.
4. _ Make sure your turkey is completely thawed, the neck and bag of gizzards removed, and that it has been thoroughly rinsed inside and outside.
5. _ Into your large stockpot or brining bag, scoop or pour the brining mix so it fills above the top of the turkey. Be sure the cavity of the turkey is not blocked at the bottom and is being filled as well.
6. _ After filling, cover the stockpot (or tie the top of the brining bag securely).
7. _ If you live in a cooler climate, and the outside temperature is in the 35°F–45°F (2°C–7°C) range, just put the turkey in the stockpot outside. If you live anywhere warmer, place the stockpot in the bottom of a cooler and fill the cooler around it with ice. If you live somewhere where the stockpot will freeze overnight, place it in your garage or somewhere that will stay at refrigeration temperatures. You can let the turkey brine for 24–48 hours.
8. _ When ready to roast, remove the turkey from the brine, rinse in the sink, and wipe dry with paper towels. Discard the brine.

For the Roast

1. _ Place your rinsed and dried turkey in a roasting pan and stuff the cavity with quartered onions and apples (this is not to eat, so you can keep the skins on the onions). The purpose is to occupy space inside the turkey to prevent drying out. The apples and onions block hot oven air from heating the inside of the bird, allowing it to cook more evenly.
2. _ Prop the turkey up on its wings, folding them under the back

of the bird, so it looks as though it will rest on its “elbows.” This will keep the rest of the meat far away from any juices that come out of the bird while cooking.

3. _ Coat the outside of your turkey with vegetable or avocado oil. I just pour some on the top and rub it around with my hands. This will help with browning. You can use a butter coating as well, but I have found that the high-temperature-safe oils brown the turkey beautifully.

4. _ Roast the turkey at 400°F until it reaches 15°F below your desired temperature. Cover the turkey with foil when you remove it from the oven, and keep the thermometer in to ensure the temperature reaches the final cooking point you are trying for.

5. _ Once you’ve reached your desired temperature, let stand at least 30 minutes, then slice and enjoy!

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