Roast Turkey (Dry-Brined)

Holiday · Serves a crowd · Serves 10–12 (a 12–14 lb turkey)

Ken's note: TBD

Salt it ahead, roast it simply, and use a thermometer. A dry brine seasons the meat and dries the skin, so it browns well, with no wet bucket. A store-bought brining kit works well too, but the dry brine is the default.

Ingredients

- 1 turkey, 12–14 lb, thawed (24 hours in the fridge per 4–5 lb)
- Kosher salt: 1 Tbsp Diamond Crystal per 4 lb of turkey (about 3 Tbsp), or half that of Morton
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 Tbsp chopped thyme or sage (optional)
- 1 onion, quartered
- 1 lemon or apple, halved, and a few herb sprigs (optional)
- 4 Tbsp butter, softened (or olive oil)
- 2 cups Chicken Stock, for the pan

Method

1. **Dry-brine (1–3 days ahead).** Remove the giblets and neck (save them for the gravy). Pat the turkey very dry. Mix the salt, pepper, and herbs and rub all over, including under the skin of the breast and inside the cavity. Set it on a rack in a pan and refrigerate uncovered 1–3 days.
2. **Roast.** Heat the oven to 325°F, with the rack in the lower third. Take the turkey out 1 hour before. Don't rinse it (the salt is absorbed); pat dry. Stuff the cavity loosely with the onion, lemon, and herbs (or with stuffing; see below), tie the legs, and tuck the wings under the bird. Rub the butter over the skin. Set it breast-up on a rack in a roasting pan, and pour the stock into the pan.
3. Roast about 1 hour per 4 pounds at 325°F: roughly 3–3½ hours for 12–14 lb (a rule of thumb; the thermometers decide). If the skin darkens too fast, tent the breast with foil. Don't baste.
4. If you stuff the turkey, put the stuffing in hot. That noticeably shortens the time it takes the turkey to reach its target temperatures, so start checking early. Bread Stuffing (baked in a dish) is the no-fuss alternative.
5. **Temperatures.** Use thermometers, more than one: at least one in the thickest part of the breast and one in the thigh (not touching bone), plus one in the center of the stuffing if the bird is stuffed. Pull the turkey when the breast reads 160°F and the thigh reads 175°F (the breast climbs to 165°F while resting). Stuffing must reach 165°F.
6. **Rest and carve.** Rest 30–40 minutes, loosely tented, while you make the gravy. Carve: remove each leg and thigh and cut them apart; slice the breast off the bone in one piece on each side, then slice across the grain. Serve on a warm platter.
7. **Pan gravy.** Make Pan Gravy (Sauces) from the drippings: about 4 cups, using ¼ cup of the skimmed fat, ¼ cup flour, and 4 cups warm turkey or chicken stock.
8. Leftovers: carve all the meat off the bones within 2 hours, and keep 3–4 days. Make Chicken Stock with the carcass (same method; simmer 3 hours).