

LAURA'S BEST (NOT-TOO-SALTY) BRINE

Ingredients:

¼ cup Kosher salt
¼ cup honey
1 bulb garlic, cut in half (do not peel)
2 bay leaves
4 sprigs thyme
4 large sprigs sage, plus more for garnish
2 teaspoons whole black peppercorns
2 teaspoons whole allspice
¼ cup fresh celery leaves (from 1 bunch)

Preparations:

In a large stockpot (5-gallon pail or cooler), add the salt, honey, garlic, bay leaves, thyme, 2 sprigs sage, the peppercorns, allspice and celery leaves. Add at least 1 quart of cold water and whisk vigorously until salt dissolves. Rinse the turkey well and carefully place in the pot with the brine, then add enough cold water to cover completely. Refrigerate at least 6 hours or overnight. Before roasting or grilling, rinse the turkey after removing from brine, then pat dry with toweling.

BUTTER-RUBBED, HERB-ENCRUSTED ROAST TURKEY

Ingredients:

1 Whole Turkey
Butter
Coarse salt
Coarse black pepper
All your favorite herbs and spices (rosemary, thyme, paprika, garlic powder...)
Things to throw in the body cavity (a bulb of garlic, an onion, a lemon...)

Preparations:

Pre-heat oven to 325 degrees.

Remove turkey giblets, gizzards, neck, or any other various organs and save for gravy. Rinse body cavity with cool water and pat dry. Rub cavity lightly with coarse salt and add aromatics (garlic, onion, lemon...) if desired.

Place the turkey, breast side up, on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Brush with melted butter, herbs, and spices, and rub butter underneath the skin. (It is not necessary to add water or to cover the turkey.)

Place turkey in pre-heated 325-degree oven. (Follow time-table for approximate roasting time.)

When turkey skin begins to turn golden brown, place a tent of foil loosely over the bird. *Roast until thigh meat achieves 165 degrees and drumsticks move easily when lifted or twisted.* When turkey is done, remove it from the oven, reserve the drippings for gravy, and let stand for 15 minutes before carving.

Keep turkey covered with foil so it will stay warm.

TIMETABLE FOR ROASTING WHOLE TURKEY

At 325 degrees, roast whole, fresh/thawed unstuffed turkey as follows:

8-12 pounds: 2.75-3 hours
12-14 pounds: 3-3.75 hours
14-18 pounds: 3.75-4.25 hours
18-20 pounds: 4.25-4.5 hours
20-24 pounds: 4.5-5 hours

ALWAYS USE A MEAT THERMOMETER! (Roast until thigh meat achieves 165 degrees and drumsticks move easily when lifted or twisted.)

TRADITIONAL PAN GRAVY

Ingredients:

Reserve turkey drippings from roasting pan
½ cup all-purpose flour
2 or more cups "giblet stock" (see recipe)
1 cup water
Salt and pepper to taste

Preparations:

Once turkey is cooked, remove from oven and pour drippings from roasting pan into medium saucepan or cooking pot. Bring drippings to medium-heat, stirring until thickened (about 4-5 minutes). Add flour and whisk for one minute. Gradually add stock, then water. Reduce to simmer and whisk until desired thickness is achieved (about 4-5 minutes). Salt and pepper to taste.

GIBLET STOCK

Ingredients:

Turkey neck
Turkey giblets
5 cups water

Preparations:

In a medium saucepan, combine neck, giblets, and water. Bring to a boil, skim foam, reduce to a simmer, stir occasionally for up to one hour. Remove solids (save for soup, compost heap, your dog, or your weird uncle) and reserve for gravy.