

Perfect Thanksgiving Dinner Menu

Main Dish

Brined & Garlic Buttered Fresh Turkey

Side Dishes:

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Green Bean Almondine

Fresh Cranberry Sauce

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Bacon

Sweet Potato Casserole

Cornbread Stuffing

Special Thanksgiving Cocktail

Apple Cider Bourbon Cocktail

Brine Recipe for a 16-20lb Turkey

Ingredients:

- 16-20 lb Fresh turkey
- 2 gallons Water
- 1 1/2 cups kosher salt
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 tbsp Peppercorns
- 2 tbsp Allspice berries
- 5-6 sprigs Fresh thyme
- 5-6 sprigs Fresh rosemary
- 3 Bay leaves
- 2 gallons Vegetable stock (or enough to fully submerge the turkey)
- Ice

Directions: Start 1 -2 days prior to Thanksgiving

- **Prepare the Brine:** In a large pot, combine the vegetable stock, kosher salt, brown sugar, peppercorns, allspice berries, thyme, rosemary, and bay leaves. Bring the mixture to a boil, stirring until the salt and sugar are fully dissolved. Remove from heat and allow it to cool to room temperature.
- **Brine the Turkey:** Clean your turkey, removing any giblets, and place it in a large brining bag or a container large enough to hold it. Pour the cooled brine over the turkey. Add the 2 gallons of water. If the turkey is not fully submerged, add additional water until it is. Add ice to keep it cool.
- **Refrigerate:** Refrigerate the turkey in the brine for approximately 24-48 hours, turning the turkey once if it's not fully submerged.
- **Prepare for Cooking:** After brining, remove the turkey from the brine, rinse it thoroughly under cold water, and pat it dry with paper towels. Proceed with your herb butter recipe below or your chosen roasting method.
- Remember, the key to a good brine is ensuring that the turkey is completely submerged and kept cool throughout the brining process. This brine will infuse your turkey with moisture and flavor, making for a delicious Thanksgiving centerpiece.

Herb Butter for a Moist Turkey

Ingredients:

- 1 cup Unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tbsp Fresh rosemary, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp Fresh thyme, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp Fresh sage, finely chopped
- 4 cloves Garlic, minced
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1/2 tsp Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

- **Mix the Ingredients:** In a bowl, combine the softened butter with rosemary, thyme, sage, minced garlic, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. Mix until well combined.
- **Prepare the Turkey:** Gently loosen the skin from the turkey breast and thighs using your fingers or a small spatula.
- **Apply the Butter:** Spread a generous amount of the herb butter under the skin of the turkey, distributing it evenly over the breast and thigh areas.
- **Refrigerate:** If not roasting immediately, refrigerate the turkey to allow the butter to firm up under the skin.
- Adding herb butter under the skin of the turkey is a fantastic way to add flavor and moisture directly to the meat. The vegetables and fruits in the cavity will steam during cooking, enhancing the turkey's juiciness and imparting subtle aromatic flavors.

Vegetable Stuffing for Turkey

Ingredients:

- 1 Large onion, quartered
- 2 Carrots, peeled and cut into large chunks
- 2 Celery stalks, cut into large chunks
- 1 Small apple, quartered (Granny Smith, HoneyCrisp, Fuji, Jonagold)
- 1 Orange, quartered
- Few sprigs fresh thyme, rosemary, and sage

Directions:

- **Prepare the Vegetables:** Wash and cut the vegetables and fruit as indicated.
- **Stuff the Turkey:** After applying the herb butter under the skin, stuff the turkey cavity with the onion, carrots, celery, apple, orange, and fresh herbs. These will infuse the turkey with additional moisture and flavor as it cooks.
- **Roast the Turkey:** Roast the turkey according to your preferred method. The combination of the herb butter and the moisture from the vegetables will help ensure the turkey remains moist and flavorful.
- The vegetables and fruits in the cavity will steam during cooking, enhancing the turkey's juiciness and imparting subtle aromatic flavors. If you prefer, you can stuff the turkey with the cornbread stuffing.

Cooking the Turkey

Temperature:

- **Initial High Temperature:** Preheat your oven to 425°F. This initial high heat will help brown the skin.
- **Lower the Temperature:** After the first 30 minutes, lower the oven temperature to 350°F. This lower temperature will cook the turkey through without burning the skin.

Cooking Time:

- **General guideline:** As a rule of thumb, a stuffed turkey will take about 15 minutes per pound to cook. For a 16-20lb turkey, you're looking at approximately 4-5 hours of cooking time. However, this can vary based on your oven and the specific size of your turkey.
- **Check Internal Temperature:** Use a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey. The turkey is done when the thickest part of the thigh reaches 165°F, and the stuffing should also reach 165°F for safety. Make sure to check in several places, including the thickest part of the breast and the innermost part of the wing.

Resting Time:

- **Rest before carving:** Once the turkey reaches the correct internal temperature, remove it from the oven and let it rest for at least 20-30 minutes. Resting allows the juices to redistribute, making for a moister turkey.

Additional Tips:

- **Basting:** Although not strictly necessary, especially with a brined turkey, you can baste the turkey every 45-60 minutes if desired.
- **Tenting with foil:** If you notice the skin browning too quickly, tent the turkey with aluminum foil to prevent burning.
- **Stuffing safety:** If you prefer, you can cook the stuffing separately. This reduces the overall cooking time and ensures that both the turkey and stuffing are cooked safely and thoroughly.

Side Dish Recipes

Garlic Mashed Potatoes:

- Boil peeled and cubed potatoes until tender. Mash with butter, milk, roasted garlic, salt, and pepper.

Green Bean Almondine:

- Blanch green beans. Sauté with butter, sliced almonds, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

Cranberry Sauce:

- Simmer fresh cranberries with orange juice, sugar, and a cinnamon stick until the berries burst.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Bacon:

- Mix halved Brussels sprouts with diced bacon, olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast until crispy.

Sweet Potato Casserole:

- Mash boiled sweet potatoes with butter, brown sugar, and spices. Top with marshmallows and bake until golden.

Cornbread Stuffing:

- Sauté diced onions and celery, mix with crumbled cornbread, chicken stock, and herbs. Bake until golden.

Apple Cider Bourbon Cocktail

Ingredients:

- Apple cider
- Bourbon
- Cinnamon sticks
- Apple slices for garnish

Directions:

- Pour in equal parts apple cider and bourbon.
- Stir gently and garnish with a cinnamon stick and apple slice.

Your Perfect Menu Shopping List

Turkey:

- Fresh turkey: 16-20 pounds
- Kosher salt: 1 1/2 cups (approximately 12 ounces)
- Brown sugar: 3/4 cup (approximately 6 ounces)
- Black peppercorns: 2 tbsp
- Allspice berries: 2 tbsp
- Fresh thyme, rosemary, and sage: 5-6 sprigs each
- Garlic: 4 cloves
- Lemon: 1 (for zest)
- Unsalted butter: 1 cup (2 sticks, 8 ounces)
- Bay leaves: 3
- Vegetable stock: 2 gallons (256 ounces)
- Large onion: 1 (for stuffing)
- Carrots: 2 large
- Celery: 2 stalks
- Small apple: 1 (Granny Smith, Honey Crisp, Fuji, Jonagold) (for stuffing)
- Orange: 1 (for stuffing)

Garlic Mashed Potatoes:

- Potatoes: 5 pounds (Russet or Yukon Gold)
- Garlic: 1 head
- Butter: 1/2 cup (4 ounces)
- Milk: 1 cup (8 ounces)

Your Perfect Menu Shopping List...Cont.

Cranberry Sauce:

- Fresh cranberries: 1 pound (16 ounces)
- Orange juice: 1 cup (8 ounces)
- Sugar: 1 cup (8 ounces)

Cornbread Stuffing:

- Cornbread: 1 pound
- Onions: 1 pound
- Celery: 1/2 pound
- Chicken stock: 2 cups (16 ounces)
- Fresh herbs (thyme, sage): a few sprigs

Sweet Potato Casserole:

- Sweet potatoes: 3 pounds
- Brown sugar: 1 cup (8 ounces)
- Marshmallows: 10 ounces
- Butter: 1/4 cup (2 ounces)

Apple Cider Bourbon Cocktail:

- Apple cider: 1 gallon (128 ounces)
- Bourbon: 750 ml bottle
- Cinnamon sticks: 1 small pack
- Apples: 2 (for garnish)

Your Perfect Menu Shopping List...Cont.

Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Bacon:

- Brussels sprouts: 1 1/2 pounds
- Bacon: 1/2 pound (8 ounces)

Basic Kitchen Staples:

- Olive oil: check pantry
- Salt (kosher and table): check pantry
- Ground black pepper: check pantry
- Sugar (brown and white): check pantry
- Milk: 1 quart (32 ounces)

Green Bean Almondine:

- Green Bean Almondine
- Fresh green beans: 1 pound
- Sliced almonds: 1/2 cup (approximately 2 ounces)
- Butter: 1/4 cup (2 ounces)

Miscellaneous:

- Ice: 1 large bag (for brining and cocktail)
- Aluminum foil: 1 roll
- Brining bag or large container

This list should cover everything you need for your Thanksgiving feast. The quantities are estimated to ensure you have enough, with some extra just in case. Happy Thanksgiving shopping!