

Ultimate Thanksgiving Turkey

First up, I need to fess up. This is not a completely original recipe. The vast majority of it is from the Food Network TV show, Good Eats. I just added a few techniques that were shared with me, as well as a few twists of my own.

At my age, I've eaten a lot of turkey in my day. Every Thanksgiving and Christmas for 40 years say I've eaten roasted turkey at least 80 times. In my opinion, this is the best turkey this side of a deep fryer.

Ingredients...

For the turkey:

- A turkey, duh (thawed)

For the brine:

- 1 cup kosher salt
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1 gallon vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 1/2 tablespoon allspice berries
- 1/2 tablespoon candied ginger
- 1 gallon iced water

For the aromatics:

- 1 red apple, sliced
- 1/2 onion, sliced
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cups water
- 4 sprigs rosemary
- 6 leaves sage

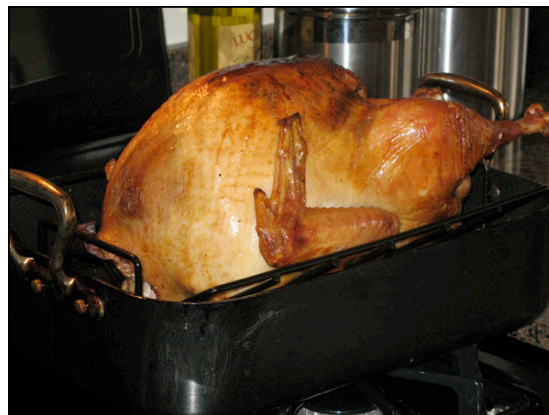
For the seasoning:

A few tablespoons of my Boogie BBQ Rub (recipe)

Canola oil

Start off by removing the neck, and any other goodies inside the bird, from the turkey.

Next by combining your salt, brown sugar and vegetable stock in something that will hold your turkey, and 2 gallons of liquid, and allow the turkey to be completely submersed. I have an old cooler that does the trick perfectly. Homer's Bucket from The Home Depot is another option, if you don't have anything big enough.



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Once all that is combined, put a stick blender in the mix and run it until the sugar and salt have dissolved. Add the rest of the brine ingredients, and your turkey.

You'll notice in the picture above that part of the turkey is poking out of the brine solution. That's not because there isn't enough liquid. It's because the turkey floats. Throw a brick or something on there to keep it completely covered. I used a plate and added the mortar from my mortar and pestle.

Store that cooler in a cool place, like the basement, or even the garage, if the temperature is right. You don't want it to freeze, but you must keep it cold. Let it sit for 7 hours.

Remove the turkey from the brine solution, and dry it off with paper towels really well.

Use the handle of a wood spoon to separate the skin from the turkey. Apply the Boogie to the turkey, beneath the skin. Rub it into the turkey cavity too.

Set your bird on some ice packs, breast side down, and let it sit on the counter for an hour. This will allow the turkey to come to room temperature before cooking it, while keeping the breast (which otherwise would be cooked before the rest of the bird) cool.

A few minutes before your hour is up, combine your sliced apple, onion and cinnamon stick with some water in a microwave safe bowl, and nuke for 5 minutes.

Drain the water off the nuked aromatics, and stuff them, along with the herbs, into the turkey.

Rub the turkey down, all over, with canola oil.

This thing needs to cook at 500 for 30 minutes. You can use your oven for this, but it will likely fill your entire house with smoke, making for a very unpleasant experience. I take mine outside and toss it on the grill.

30 minutes and 500 degrees later, this is what your turkey will look like.

Insert your probe thermometer into the thickest part of the breast, and put the turkey in a 350 oven.

Set the thermometer to alert you when the the turkey reaches 161. Carry-over will continue cooking the turkey once it's removed from the oven.

Once the bird reaches 161 (could take anywhere from 2-3 hours, depending on your oven and the size of the turkey), remove it from the oven, cover it (loosely) in foil, and let it sit for 30 minutes. There you have the perfect holiday turkey!

Carve, serve, and pig out!