

How to Brine Turkey

Now it's time to plop the turkey into the brine. I place it into the brine "head first". If it goes in "feet first", air may become trapped in the body cavity. The brine has to contact every part of the turkey, inside and out. To keep the bird submerged, lay a heavy plate on top of the brine, inside the brining container.

Gently slosh the turkey in the brine every couple of hours while you're awake. You want that brine to do its magic.

Depending on the size of the turkey, brining can take from 8 to 24 hours. A 10 lb turkey needs about 8 hours in the brine. A 14 lb bird will need about 12 hours. Anything larger may need up to 24 hours.

NOTE: If you prefer a less-salty smoked turkey, brine it for a shorter amount of time. Try brining it half as long. Rinse it well, and let it rest overnight in the [fridge](#). This will give time for the brine concentrated near the surface to move deeper into the turkey.

Another option is to brine it for the full time, rinse it well, then soak it in fresh, cold water overnight (in the fridge) to leech out some of the salt.

It's not a good idea to decrease the amount of salt in the brine recipe. Doing so *will* decrease the saltiness, but the weakened brine won't provide any moisture-retention or flavor-improving benefits.

I recommend smoking a turkey weighing 14 pounds or less. A larger bird will heat up more slowly, allowing micro-organisms a chance to multiply. I prefer birds that are nearer to eleven pounds, since they take less time to smoke. At the [Food Safety](#) page, you'll find great information regarding safe [food](#) handling and food smoking safety. It's worth taking a peek.

Rinse and Dry

After removing the bird from the brine, rinse it in cold, running water. Make sure you clean the body cavity in addition to the outside surface. Position the bird upright, as if it were dancing, in the kitchen sink to drain. You want most of the water to drain from the body cavity. After five to ten minutes, pat the turkey dry with a towel to ready it for seasoning. Be careful if you use paper towels...they can melt onto the turkey flesh, and the resulting mess can be difficult to remove.

The Curing Rest

For the best texture and flavor, let the turkey rest uncovered in the [refrigerator](#) twelve to twenty four hours. This gives the salt and brine flavorings time to distribute evenly throughout the turkey. It allows the salt time to modify the proteins, which will improve the texture and moisture retention.

Seasoning The Turkey

The brined turkey can be seasoned with a dry mix of spices and herbs, or with a wet rub. I use a dry mix in the cavity, but I prefer to use a [wet rub](#) on the outside surfaces of the turkey. I believe it adheres better, plus the oil in it improves the moistness and color of the smoked turkey. To make a wet rub, mix vegetable or

olive oil into the dry ingredients until you have a thin paste.

The trick to seasoning a brined turkey is to get the flavors under the skin. Remember when you separated the skin from the breast before brining? You were preparing it for seasoning at the same time.

Again, carefully lift the skin and coat the meat with some of the wet rub. Try to completely cover the exposed flesh. Pull the skin back into place after you've seasoned the bird. I use a couple of toothpicks to hold the skin in place, since it shrinks as it cooks. You don't want the meat uncovered as it smokes.

Season the outer surface of the turkey with the remaining wet rub. Get into all the nooks and crannies...under the wings and legs. Next, flavor up the inside of the turkey with dry spices. Try this great [turkey dry rub](#) recipe I found at the website [BBQ-FYI.com](#). After seasoning, I loosely truss the legs together with a length of butchers' string. Now it's ready for the smoker.

Smoking The Turkey

Get your smoker up to 225 degrees Fahrenheit before you put in the turkey. Oil the grate to prevent sticking. Maintain a temperature of 225 to 250 degrees throughout the smoking session. I like my smoked turkey to be kissed with a combination of oak and apple smoke, about half and half. Use two or three fist sized chunks, spaced throughout the session...you don't want it to be overpowered with smoke flavor. Normally, it will need to smoke from 30 to 40 minutes per pound. Baste the turkey with a little melted butter a few times as it smokes.

When the thick part of the thigh reaches 170 degrees, and the breast about 160, it's time to remove the turkey. The temperature will rise after removing it from the smoker. When the breast reaches 150F, cover it with foil to prevent it from being overcooked.

All that remains is to cover the smoked turkey with a foil tent, and let it rest for at least one-half hour, breast side down, before slicing. This allows the juices and smoke flavor to evenly disperse throughout the flesh as it firms up.

HERITAGE TURKEY ROASTING TIMES

(155°-160° DEGREES IN THIGH)

	WEIGHT RANGE	COOKING TIME
OVEN TEMP: 325	8-12 LB RANGE	1 ¹ / ₄ - 2 ¹ / ₄ HOURS
	12-14 LB RANGE	2 ¹ / ₄ - 2 ³ / ₄ HOURS
	14-16 LB RANGE	2 ³ / ₄ - 3 ¹ / ₂ HOURS

HELPFUL TIPS:

THIS IS A HERITAGE TURKEY AND ROASTING INSTRUCTIONS ARE DIFFERENT FROM A WHITE TURKEY.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOU DO NOT STUFF A HERITAGE TURKEY, THE MEAT WILL DRY OUT.

PLACE AN OVEN-SAFE THERMOMETER IN THE THICKEST PART OF THE THIGH MEAT BEFORE YOU BEGIN ROASTING.

PLACE THE PAN IN THE OVEN SO THAT YOU CAN READ THE THERMOMETER WITHOUT HAVING TO OPEN THE OVEN DOOR.

TURKEY IS DONE WHEN THE TEMPERATURE REACHES 155 DEGREES. MEAT MAY BE SLIGHTLY PINK NEXT TO THE BONE. IF THIS BOTHERS YOU, COOK UNTIL 160 DEGREES. WATCH THE TURKEY CLOSELY.

ONCE THE THERMOMETER REACHES 145 DEGREES, IT WILL THEN RISE QUICKLY. LET THE TURKEY REST 30 MINUTES BEFORE CARVING.

BRINE RECIPE

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 CUPS APPLE JUICE
- 1 GALLON WATER
- 1¹/₄ CUPS KOSHER SALT
- 1¹/₂ CUPS BROWN SUGAR
- 3 TBSP. OF WHOLE PEPPERCORNS
- 5 CLOVES GARLIC
- 4 ROSEMARY SPRIGS
- PEEL FROM 3 ORANGES
- 5 BAY LEAVES

- 1: BRING ALL ITEMS TO BOIL IN A LARGE POT.
- 2: REMOVE FROM HEAT AND ADD 1/2 GALLON ICE WATER.
- 3: LET BRINE COMPLETELY COOL TO ROOM TEMPERATURE.
- 4: PUT TURKEY IN A LARGE POT, BUCKET OR BRINING BAG AND COVER COMPLETELY WITH THE BRINE.
- 5: LET SOAK OVERNIGHT FOR AT LEAST A MINIMUM OF 12 HOURS.
- 6: REMOVE THE TURKEY FROM THE BRINE AND PLACE IN THE ROASTING PAN. (YOU CAN RINSE THE TURKEY IF YOU WISH.) ADD SOME PATS OF BUTTER UNDER THE TURKEY SKIN. SEASON THE OUTSIDE OF THE TURKEY WITH BLACK PEPPER. POUR 1-2 CUPS OF TURKEY STOCK INTO THE BOTTOM OF THE ROASTING PAN.
- 7: PLACE THE TURKEY IN THE OVEN AND ROAST UNTIL THE THICKEST PART OF THE THIGH IS 155-160 DEGREES. SEE CHART ABOVE FOR APPROXIMATE ROASTING TIMES.
- 8: REMOVE THE TURKEY FROM THE OVEN, TENT WITH FOIL AND LET REST 30 MINUTES BEFORE CARVING.
- 9: STRAIN THE JUICES FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE PAN TO MAKE GRAVY.



**KNOW YOUR FARMER
KNOW YOUR FOOD**