

Brined Turkey

Trust me here-you will never again complain, nor hear complaints, about dry breast meat if you take this easy first step in the preparation of your holiday bird. After nearly twenty years of cooking a Thanksgiving turkey, I am convinced that brining produces the most moist and flavorful turkey I have ever tasted. Brining requires nothing more than boiling water with salt, sugar, and spices; cooling the mixture; then soaking the turkey in the brine for 12 to 24 hours.



Recipe picture

Ingredients:

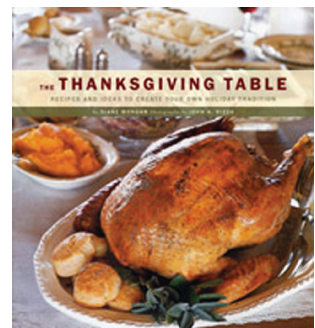
Juniper Brine or Apple Cider Brine (recipes follow)

1 fresh or thawed turkey (10 to 25 pounds)

2 oranges, quartered (if you are using Apple Cider Brine)

Special Equipment

2 turkey-size plastic oven bags (see Cook's Note)



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Recipes and Ideas to Create Your Own
Holiday Tradition
By Diane Morgan

Have ready a heavy roasting pan large enough to hold the turkey. Place a plastic oven bag inside a second one to create a double thickness (see Cook's Note); then place these bags, open wide, in the roasting pan. Remove the turkey from its wrapping. Remove the neck and bag of giblets from the main and neck cavity of the bird. Store separately in the refrigerator for making gravy. If using the Apple Cider Brine, at this point, stuff the main cavity of the turkey with the orange quarters.

Fold back the top third of the bags, making a collar (this helps to keep the top of the bag open). Place the turkey inside the double-thick bags, stand it upright, unfold the top of the bag, and pour the Juniper Brine or Apple Cider Brine over the bird. Add an additional 2 cups of cold water. Draw up the top of the inner bag, squeezing out as much air as possible; then secure it closed with a twist tie. Do the same for the outer bag. Place the turkey, breast side down, in the roasting pan and refrigerate for 12 to 24 hours. Turn the turkey 3 or 4 times while it is brining.

Just prior to roasting, remove the turkey from the brine. Discard the bags, brine, and any cured herbs or spices remaining on the bird. Discard the oranges and ginger if using the Apple Cider Brine.) Rinse the turkey under cold water and pat dry with paper towels.

Makes 3 1/2 quarts brine; enough for a 10- to 25-pound turkey

Cook's Notes

The easiest way to crush whole spices is to use a mortar and pestle or a spice grinder. If you do not have either of these kitchen tools, then place the whole spices in a heavy lock-top plastic bag, seal the bag pressing out all the air, and pound them with the bottom of a small, heavy saucepan.

Plastic oven bags (made by Reynolds) are found with other food storage bags at supermarkets. Buy the turkey-size bags. They are food-safe, plus they are big, strong, tear-resistant, and come with twist ties. I do not recommend using plastic garbage bags because they are not intended for food storage. I use a double thickness of bags as a precautionary measure against leakage. For the same reason, I place the bagged turkey in a roasting pan.

Juniper Brine

2/3 cup kosher salt
2/3 cup sugar
5 fresh sage leaves
4 sprigs fresh thyme
2 bay leaves
6 whole cloves
1 teaspoon juniper berries, crushed
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns, crushed
2 teaspoons whole allspice berries, crushed

Put all the ingredients in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan. Add 8 cups of water and stir to combine. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring until the salt and sugar have dissolved. Boil for 3 minutes; then remove from the heat. Add 4 cups of ice-cold water, stir, and set aside to cool. Then proceed with the directions for Brined

Apple Cider Brine

2/3 cup kosher salt
2/3 cup sugar
6 quarter-size slices fresh ginger
2 bay leaves
6 whole cloves
1 teaspoon black peppercorns, crushed
2 teaspoons whole allspice berries, crushed
8 cups unsweetened apple cider or juice

In a 3- to 4-quart saucepan, put the salt, sugar, ginger, bay leaves, cloves, peppercorns, and allspice. Add 8 cups of apple cider or juice and stir to combine. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring until the salt and sugar have dissolved. Boil for 3 minutes; then remove from the heat. Add 4 cups of ice-cold water, stir, and set aside to cool. Then proceed with the directions for Brined Turkey..