



Heirloom turkeys are becoming more popular these days. Last year, I served my family a Bourbon Red. It has a richer meat than do the traditional varieties.

I like to brine my turkey for 24 hours before cooking.

Brine

This is a great all purpose brine. We use this to brine for whole turkeys, pork and sometimes salmon for fire roasting or smoking.

You can change the flavor by playing with the liquid. For instance, we will sometimes substitute some wine or apple cider for some water when brining pork.

The salt to liquid ratio is very important, so I would not recommend changing this.

- 1 gal water
- 1 c kosher salt
- 2 c golden brown sugar
- ½ c whole black peppercorns
- 1 bunch thyme, fresh

Cooking the Turkey

I prefer a 12-16 pound bird and a cooking time of 10-15 minutes per pound. The internal temperature of the thigh needs to reach 145-150 degrees.

Here are a few tips to ensure that your Heritage turkey stays moist and flavorful.

Remove the fresh turkey from the refrigerator one or two hours before you are ready to cook it so it approaches room temperature. Thoroughly rinse and pat dry. Resist the temptation to stuff the bird, as this requires longer cooking which can dry the bird. Season the cavity of the turkey with salt, pepper and any fresh herb stalks you would like.

Mix together one pound of softened butter with ¼ cup of chopped fresh herbs such as rosemary, sage and thyme. Where the thigh meets the breast, separate the skin from the meat and slide up as far as you can. Rub herb butter over the meat, under the skin, using at least 1/2 cup of the butter mixture. This will help keep the turkey moist.

Pre-heat the oven to 400 degrees. Rub the skin with the herb butter and place the turkey in a

roasting pan in the oven. Immediately reduce the heat to 375 degrees. At twenty-minute intervals, rub the turkey with any additional herb butter. Reduce oven to 325 degrees after 90 minutes. Once there is enough melted butter in the bottom of the pan, baste the turkey with these juices every 20 minutes, using a good pastry brush.

I don't usually find it necessary to cover the turkey during cooking, but if the skin begins to darken too quickly, use parchment paper rubbed with oil rather than foil. The oiled paper allows moisture to escape, allowing you to roast rather than steam-cook.

Continue basting and cooking the turkey until it reaches the desired temperature. A quick test; check the color of the juices inside the cavity. If they are red or pink, it needs to cook longer. It is always best to test with a cooking thermometer. When done, remove the turkey from the oven and place on a cutting board to rest. Cover loosely to keep the heat in and allow carry-over cooking for 20 minutes. You can finish your gravy before the turkey is ready to carve.

Chef Bruce Riezenman
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Eat well!