

THE ULTIMATE PREP GUIDE TO

Thanksgiving



VINDULGE



Contents

BUYING GUIDE

Everything you need to know to buy the perfect turkey for your dinner needs.

MENU

The three course meal we're serving to our family and friends. Choose the whole turkey for large gatherings or opt for just the breast for a smaller dinner.

TIMELINE

Be ahead of the curve with this detailed Turkey Day timeline

RECIPES

Citrus and Bourbon Poultry Brine

Ultimate Dry Rub

Bourbon-Brined Smoked Turkey

Smoked Turkey Breast with Maple Glaze

Additional Recipes

Turkey Buying Guide

BUY OR PRE-ORDER IN ADVANCE

Waiting until the last minute might have worked for your school projects, but it's not going to work for Thanksgiving if you have a particular type of turkey in mind, or are hoping for a specific size. Frozen turkeys are flash frozen right after butchering and will stay fresh for up to six months in the freezer (just be sure you have room!). Fresh turkeys will last a couple of days in the refrigerator so order about a month in advance and schedule for pick up Monday-Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving.

SIZE AND SHAPE

Consider how many people you are feeding and how many leftovers you hope to have. Aim for at least 1 pound of turkey per person, averaging up to 2 pounds if you want lots of leftovers. We usually shoot for 1.25 pounds per person. When buying a frozen turkey, look for a rounded breast. Flat spots indicate it may have thawed and been refrozen.

CONSIDER PARTS AND MULTIPLES

We prefer cooking two smaller birds (around 12 pounds each) rather than one large bird. The larger birds can tend to dry out in the smoker since they have so much longer to cook. Two small birds allows you to cook them faster while still having plenty of meat. You can also cook breasts, thighs, and legs each to temperature individually. This works well if you have a small smoker or if your family prefers only white meat or only dark meat.

WHERE TO BUY

- Your local butcher
- D'Artagnan Foods (dartagnan.com) (affiliate)



Menu

APPETIZERS

Grilled Brie with Crostini
Bacon-Wrapped Dates

MAIN COURSE

Bourbon-Brined Smoked Turkey
or
Maple Turkey Breast with Smoked Gravy

SIDE DISHES

Smoked Sausage Cornbread Stuffing
Duck Fat Roasted Potatoes
Grilled Brussels Sprouts
Red Wine Cranberry Sauce

DESSERT

Maple Bourbon Pecan Pie

DRINKS

Assorted Wine
Mulled Apple Cider with Bourbon



VINDULGE

Timeline

1 - 6 MONTHS IN ADVANCE

- Buy a frozen turkey up to six months in advance
- Or, pre-order a fresh turkey one month in advance
- Order assorted wines from VindulgeWine.com

SUNDAY

- Finalize headcount and menu
- Shop if you have to work Mon. - Wed.
- Predetermine plates and service items

MONDAY

- Grocery Shop
- Start thawing the turkey in the fridge

TUESDAY

- Make the Red Wine Cranberry Sauce
- Prep Citrus and Bourbon Brine and Dry Rub
- Make Pecan Pie

WEDNESDAY

- Begin Brining Turkey in the morning
- Bake Cornbread and smoke Sausage for Stuffing
- Prep Bacon Wrapped Dates
- Make Smoked Turkey Leg Gravy
- Set and Decorate Table

THURSDAY

- Smoke Turkey
- Mull Apple Cider
- Make Stuffing
- Warm Brie Cheese
- Grill Brussels Sprouts, Dates, and Potatoes







Recipes

Basic Turkey Brine with Citrus and Bourbon

MAKES: 8 qts | PREP TIME: 3 MINUTES | SIT TIME: 1 DAY

INGREDIENTS

- 8 Qts water
- 1½ Cups kosher salt
- ⅓ Cup dark brown sugar
- ⅓ Tbs whole peppercorns
- 1 Cup bourbon
- 2 Oranges, quartered
- 1 Lemon, quartered
- 10 Whole cloves
- 2 Dry bay leaves

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large stock pot add water, salt, and sugar. Stir to dissolve the sugar and salt in the water.
2. Add remaining ingredients, squeeze the citrus to add to the flavor and stir.
3. Add 12 – 16 pound turkey to the stock pot and cover. Brine for 24 – 30 hours to maximize flavor.





Ultimate Homemade Dry Rub

MAKES: 2 cups | PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES

INGREDIENTS

- 1 Cup brown sugar
- ½ Cup kosher salt
- 4 Tbs smoked paprika
- 2 Tbs coarse black pepper
- ½ Tbs cumin
- ½ Tbs onion powder
- ½ Tbs garlic powder
- 1 Tsp cayenne pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine all ingredients together in a bowl. Transfer to an air tight serving container (like a mason jar or other dry rub container). Will keep for up to a year if sealed tight and kept in a cool place.



Bourbon Brined Smoked Turkey Recipe

SERVES: 8 | COOK TIME: 4 HOURS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 12-14 lb whole turkey
- 1 Batch of Brine (page 8)
- ½ Cup Ultimate Dry Rub (page 9)

FOR THE HERB BUTTER

- 1 Stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
- ½ Tbs fresh rosemary, chopped
- ½ Tbs fresh thyme, chopped
- ½ Tbs fresh sage, chopped

FOR THE CAVITY STUFFING

- 2 Oranges, quartered
 - 1 Lemon, quartered
 - 1 Red or yellow onion, quartered
 - 6 Cloves garlic
 - 10 Sprigs thyme
 - 2 Sprigs rosemary
-

DIRECTIONS

Brine.

Prepare turkey for brine by fully defrosting, and removing giblets, neck, and trimming off excess fat. In a large stock pot over medium-high heat, combine water, salt, sugar, and bourbon. Bring heat up and dissolve the salt and sugar into the liquid, then turn off heat. Let cool and then add remaining brine ingredients. Add turkey to brine and cover. Brine for 24 hours, avoid going beyond 30 hours. At a minimum brine for four.

Herb Butter.

Add herbs to room temperature butter and combine. Be sure when you are using for the turkey, it is still room temperature.

Dry Rub.

Remove turkey from brine and rinse. Pat dry with a towel, especially the cavity. Season liberally with dry rub and place into the refrigerator for 4 hours.

Preheat Smoker.

After four hours, preheat Smoker to 275 degrees using fruit wood.

Stuff Bird.

Stuff cavity of the bird with thyme, rosemary, oranges, lemons, and garlic. Then stuff butter between the skin and breasts, spreading it out with your hands all along the breast. Tie up legs and wings with kitchen string, or tuck them to keep tight against the turkey.

Smoke.

Place turkey on the smoker, and insert your digital meat probe into the breast and thigh or leg. Smoke until the internal temperature of both reads 165 degrees (F). Use an instant read to check temp in various part of the turkey, even if the digital probes read 165 to confirm all parts of the turkey are cooked through.

Rest.

Remove from smoker (will likely take 3 – 4 hours with a 12 – 14 pound bird) and cover with foil. Let cool for about 20 minutes. Then slice and serve.

Smoked Turkey Breast with Maple Glaze

SERVES: 4 | COOK TIME: 2 HOURS

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE BRINE

- 4 Qts. water
- ¾ Cup kosher salt
- ¼ Cup cane sugar
- ½ Red onion
- 1 Quartered orange
- 1 Quartered lemon
- ¼ Cup whole peppercorns
- 2 Dry bay leaves

FOR THE TURKEY

- 1 3-4 lb boneless turkey breast
 - 1 Tbs olive oil
 - 2 Tbs Dry Rub (page 9)
 - ¼ Cup maple syrup
 - 1 Tbs orange juice
-

DIRECTIONS

Brine.

In a large stock pot add water, salt, and sugar. Stir to incorporate the salt and sugar into the liquid. Add the remaining brine ingredients. Squeeze the citrus to incorporate the juice.

Add the turkey breast to the brine, cover, and brine in the refrigerator overnight (or up to 24 hours). Remove the turkey from the brine, and pat dry with a paper towel. Place, uncovered, into a refrigerator for 2 hours to allow the skin to dry.

Preheat.

Preheat smoker to 250 degrees Fahrenheit using a fruit wood, like cherry or apple. While smoker comes to temperature, remove the turkey from the fridge and coat in olive oil, and season liberally with dry rub.

Smoke.

Smoke the turkey for 2 – 3 hours, depending on the size of the turkey breast, or until the internal temperature of the turkey is 160 degrees F.

Glaze.

In a small bowl combine maple syrup and orange juice. When the turkey reaches 160 degrees brush the turkey breast with the maple orange combination. Remove the turkey from the smoker and let it rest for 15 minutes.

Serve.

Slice and serve with your smoked gravy or favorite topping.



More Recipes

APPETIZERS

<https://www.vindulge.com/baked-brie-cheese-on-grill/>

<https://www.vindulge.com/grilled-bacon-wrapped-dates-with-smoked-honey/>

SIDE DISHES

<https://www.vindulge.com/smoked-sausage-and-cornbread-stuffing/>

<https://www.vindulge.com/duck-fat-potatoes/>

<https://www.vindulge.com/grilled-brussels-sprouts/>

<https://www.vindulge.com/red-wine-cranberry-sauce-recipe/>

DESSERT

<https://www.vindulge.com/grilled-pecan-pie/>

DRINKS

<https://vindulgewine.com/>

<https://www.vindulge.com/bourbon-spiked-hot-apple-cider/>

