



The Traditional Turkey

Some classics never go out of style! This recipe uses herbs like sage, rosemary, and thyme in both the brine and the rub, and the addition of a butter paste really makes it shine. This is the perfect centerpiece for a Norman Rockwell Thanksgiving spread!

Preferred Smoking Fuel

- Cherry or pecan

Items Needed

- [Turkey Tom Briner Bucket](#)

Ingredients

- A minimally processed turkey
- [Malcom's Bird Brine](#)
- [Dizzy Pig Mad Max Turkey rub](#)
- 2 sticks unsalted butter
- [Cornhusker Kitchen Duck Fat spray](#)



Instructions

1. If using a frozen turkey, allow six hours of thawing time in the refrigerator per pound of turkey. For food safety reasons, never thaw meat at room temperature!

2. **On Monday evening:** Make the brine by mixing one bottle of brine in two quarts of hot water. Stir the brine until the salt is dissolved, let the brine cool to room temperature, then refrigerate it.
3. **On Tuesday evening:** Remove the turkey from its packaging. Remove and discard the pop-up thermometer and the leg tie, if present. Remove the neck and giblets from the cavity (reserve them if [making stock for gravy](#)). Trim off any excess skin at both cavity openings. If present, cut off the flap of skin running across the bottom of the main cavity opening. Lastly, neatly cut off the tail stub.
4. Pour the brine mixture into the briner bucket, then put the turkey in the briner bucket. Position the locking plate of the briner bucket just above the turkey. Add water as needed to completely submerge the turkey, then set the briner bucket, with the turkey inside, into the refrigerator.
5. Brine the turkey for twenty-four hours. Every 6–8 hours, remove the turkey from the bucket and stir the brine.
6. **On Wednesday evening:** Remove the turkey from the brine and rinse it thoroughly, including inside the cavity. Pat the entire turkey dry with paper towels.
7. Using your fingers, gently loosen the skin over the breast meat. Do not try to loosen the skin where it's attached to the breastbone! Also, work your way down over the thighs as far as you comfortably can. Be careful not to tear the skin!
8. Set the turkey on a wire rack in a rimmed baking sheet and return it to the refrigerator uncovered for twelve hours. This dehydrates the skin for better crisping.
9. Make a butter paste by mixing the two sticks of softened unsalted butter with three tablespoons of the Mad Max Turkey rub. Refrigerate the paste until you're ready to use it.
10. **On Thursday:** One hour before you begin smoking the turkey, spray the smoker grates with cooking oil, then pre-heat the smoker to 325°.
11. Set the turkey on the countertop, away from any hot stoves. Place a gallon zip-lock bag of ice over the breast meat, pinning it in place with toothpicks as needed. Make sure no ice contacts the drumsticks. Let the turkey sit like this for one hour on the countertop. This step keeps the

breast meat chilled while allowing the thigh meat to warm slightly (you want them cooked to different internal temperatures as explained in step 15).

12. If using a charcoal smoker, add 2–3 chunks of pecan or cherry smoking wood.
13. Warm the Mad Max butter paste until very soft, then work it under the skin you've previously loosened, and also apply the paste to the entire outside of the bird.
14. Set the turkey directly onto the smoker grate with the breast meat up and turned away from the hottest side of your smoker (you will use a slightly different setup if [making gravy](#)).
15. After one hour of smoking, spray the turkey with the Duck Fat spray. This enhances browning.
16. Smoking the turkey should take 10–11 minutes per pound. After 1-1/2 –2 hours, check the turkey. Cover any areas with aluminum foil (wing tips, leg bones, breast meat, etc.) that are starting to really darken. Keep checking the darkness of the skin every 20–30 minutes and add or remove foil as needed. Also check the internal temperature. You're looking for a final temperature of 157–158° in the center of the breast and 175–180° in the center of the thigh. If you followed the ice bag step, you should be able to hit these different temperatures almost simultaneously. If the thighs are lagging behind, make sure they reach at least 175°. If the breasts are running lower, make sure to cook them to 157°.
17. Remove the turkey from the smoker and set it on a platter. Very loosely tent it with foil and let it rest for thirty minutes.
18. Carve and enjoy!
19. Store any leftovers in a covered container in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Pro Tips

- Want to know what size turkey you should smoke? Here's a simple calculation: plan on one pound of raw turkey weight (including the

giblets, bones, etc.) per person. This will give you plenty, and still allow for some leftover turkey sandwiches over the weekend! If serving a lot of people, cook two small turkeys rather than one huge one. The smaller ones will cook faster and more consistently, and the meat will be juicier and more tender.

- The salt and other brine ingredients will slowly settle in the briner bucket. Put the turkey into the briner bucket breast meat down to help the leaner part of the turkey (most likely to dry out) absorb more of the brine solution.
- Do not truss or tie the turkey at all. Rather, make sure the legs and wings are slightly sprawled out. This will result in beautifully browned skin over the entire bird and will also allow the thighs to cook slightly faster.
- Turn the breast away from the hottest side of your smoker. Every smoker tends to have a hotspot, even kamado-style cookers.

If the cook finishes quicker than anticipated, transfer the turkey to a pan, cover it with aluminum foil, and set it in an empty cooler. Set a towel in the bottom of the cooler and then lay another one on top of the turkey for extra insulation. Close the lid and leave it closed until you're ready to eat. You can safely hold the turkey like this for at least 1-1/2 hours. The only downside of this technique is that the skin will soften quite a bit.

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