

Brine Method for Turkey, Duck, Goose or Chicken

Prep Time: 12–14 Hours

Yields: 1 Turkey

Comment:

Brining is a pretreatment in which the turkey is placed in a salt water solution known as brine. This produces a moist and well-seasoned bird. Normally, meat loses about 30 percent of its weight during cooking, but if you brine the meat first, you can reduce the moisture loss by as little as 15 percent. Additionally, brining enhances juiciness. The muscle fibers absorb the flavored liquid during the brining period. Some of this liquid will get lost during cooking, but since the meat is in a sense more juicy at the start of cooking, it ends up much juicier and flavorful. I recommend brining in two plastic trash bags, one inside the other, to hold the turkey and brine. I then place the bags in a large metal or ceramic bowl. Once the brine is added, I seal the bag with a wire tie and place in the bottom of a refrigerator, shaking the bag every couple of hours. You may also place the bird in a small ice chest, breast down, covering with the brine. If using the ice chest method, chill the brine to approximately 40°F, and then add 5–6 ice packs to maintain temperature overnight. A smaller bird works best when brining.

Ingredients:

- 1 (12–14 pound) turkey or other fowl
- 2 gallons cold water
- 1 cup kosher salt or 2 cups table salt
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 4 bay leaves, crushed
- 1 tbsp dried thyme
- 1 tbsp dried basil
- 1 tbsp dried sage
- 2 tbsps granulated garlic
- 2 tbsps black pepper

Method:

Begin brining 1 day prior to cooking turkey. Completely thaw the bird. Wash bird, removing giblets and neck. In a large stockpot, dissolve 1 cup kosher salt or 2 cups table salt in 2 gallons cold water. Add brown sugar, and stir until completely dissolved. Add bay leaves, thyme, basil, sage, granulated garlic and pepper. Place 2 trash bags inside of a large metal bowl, and place turkey breast down in bags. Add brine mixture, tie bags with wire ties, and place in bottom of refrigerator. Chill 12–14 hours. NOTE: If desired, cut chill time in half by doubling all ingredients except water. Remove turkey from brine, rinse well inside and out under cold running water. Completely dry bird using kitchen or paper towels. This step allows skin to become crisp during roasting