

On Brining a Turkey

Why brine?

A brine is, at its simplest, salt water. We like to add brown sugar for richness as well as spices, citrus, herbs, and alliums for depth of flavor. Immersing your turkey in brine will infuse it with the trifecta of salt, sweet, and savory, as well as boost the cell's ability to hold water, therefore increasing juiciness. Feel free to add ingredients of your choosing to your brine to further enhance the turkey experience (apples/oranges/shallot...whatever you like).

You will want to make your brine a day ahead, as it will need to chill thoroughly. For safety reasons, you never want to immerse a turkey in warm water. Plan ahead and make sure you can fit your container/bucket in your refrigerator.

Tools needed:

*Stock Brine Kit · Water · A large pot, at least 4 quart capacity
A large non-reactive receptacle for holding the bird (5-gallon bucket works well)*

DAY 1: *Make the brine. The day before you immerse your turkey, dump the contents of the Brine Kit into your large pot. Add 2 quarts of water as well as the provided lemon and garlic. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the salt and sugar. Reduce heat and simmer for about 10 minutes. Kill the heat and add the rosemary; let steep for another 10 minutes. Dump the entire contents of the pot into your 5-gallon bucket and add 2 gallons plus 2 quarts fresh water. Chill well overnight.*

DAY 2: *Immerse the bird. The next day, you are ready to dunk your turkey (don't forget to remove the NECK from the cavity). The brine time will vary depending on your bird. The longer your turkey sits in that water, the saltier it will become, so plan ahead. Here is a guideline for how long your bird should be brined:
10-12 pounds: 14 hours · 13-15 pounds: 16 hours · 16-19 pounds: 18 hours*

DAY 3: *Removal. Pull your bird from the brine. A rinse is not necessary, but be sure to remove all excess liquid from the cavity and pat dry. Leave uncovered in your refrigerator until it's go time—you'll want to remove your bird from the fridge about an hour before it makes its way into the oven (or fryer. Or smoker. Or spit!).*

Though nerdy, we recommend you take notes on your procedures and outcomes so that you can dial in your brined turkey to your tastes. We only do this turkey dance once a year, so notes from Holidays past are always a welcome aid.

