

The Best Turkey Ever!

Starting points:

- We also have a spatchcock (flattened) turkey recipe
- Turkey does not have to be brined
- Skin is not necessarily the best part – but it will look great
- Makes fantastic gravy
- A 6 kg turkey was used for this recipe

Required Items

- Turkey (not frozen)
- Two onions
- Celery (perhaps a carrot or two)
- Fresh herbs (tarragon, sage, thyme, rosemary and whatever else sounds good). If you don't want to use herbs, then generously rub with your favourite Dizzy Pig rub
- 2 apples
- 1 lemon
- 1 pound (4 sticks) of butter: 2 for the turkey; 2 for the gravy
- 1 gallon zip-lock bag
- Bottle of white wine
- Flour
- Roasting pan
- Stock pot (at least 4 quarts)



Directions

1) Gravy

1) Clean out insides (neck, heart, giblets, liver, fat...) - put into a large pot.



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2) Add a halved onion, couple of stalks of celery, a carrot or two, fresh herbs (in this case tarragon, sage, thyme -- rosemary is also good.)

3) Fill the pot to the top with water and let simmer all day. This will be your stock for making the gravy. As it simmers, add water occasionally to keep the level up. This will do two things: 1) make your house smell great all day and 2) create a wonderful rich stock for the gravy.

2) Turkey

Clean & dry the bird, salt and pepper the cavity (don't be shy). Into the cavity stick one small onion (halved), one apple (quartered), one lemon (quartered) and a big bouquet of herbs (rosemary, sage, thyme, and whatever else you like). I also like to put some Dizzy Pig rub in as well as some garlic. Take two sticks of butter, softened. Chop up more fresh herbs and mix it into the butter till you have a nice paste. Put the bird in a roasting pan, breast up, elevated in a v-rack (you don't want it touching the bottom of the pan). Quarter another apple and throw it directly in the roasting pan around the bird.

To Note: Make sure the turkey is dry (if not the herbs will not stick to the outside). Use butcher twine to tie legs together.

Two Important Steps

1. 20 minutes before BBQing the turkey, take a one gallon zip lock bag full of ice and lay it over the breasts for 20 minutes. Remove the bag of ice just before putting it on the BBQ. This is important because if you don't, you will overcook your white meat and it will come out tasting dry (white meat cooks quicker and requires a lower temp than dark meat).

2. Take your butter paste and liberally apply it all over the bird. Work some under the skin as well. Then, pour half a bottle of white wine over the bird and in the cavity. DON'T drink the rest of the bottle (you will need it for the gravy).



The BBQ Set Up

Test your Primo (Saffire, other Kamado) set-up before this date and remember that a turkey is big. Essentially, you need indirect heat under your roasting pan. Some options to achieve this is to use the heat deflector (plate setter), and place a barrier in between the deflector and the pan. If you put the roasting pan on the plate setter your gravy will burn.



The Fire

1. Clean out the firebox very well and fill it up with natural lump charcoal. Add one or two good chunks of apple wood (cherry, other) for additional flavour.
2. Get a good established fire going at 325 degrees & let burn for about 45 minutes prior to putting the turkey in (a full load at 325 will last around 8 hours, so it can be close for a 20lb+ bird).



The Cook

A 21 pound turkey at 325 degrees takes about 6 ½ - 7 hours to be done.

- During the cook regularly baste it with a bulb baster (about once every 20 minutes after the first hour).
- Ensure there is always water in your water pan (if using one)
- When the skin starts browning, loosely tent it with aluminium foil until about the last hour, when you should remove the foil to let the skin crisp up and come up to a nice golden brown.
- Check the inside temperature during the last two hours. The goal is to have internal temps of 160-165 in the breast and 175-180 in the thigh (this is where the ice bag does its work).

Pull the turkey out when:

- 1) A deep poke in the thigh and breast resulted in clear juices running;

2) When the drumstick rotates freely at the joint



The Gravy

When your turkey is done roasting and prior to moving it to a platter, tip up the bird so that all the juices will run out of the cavity back into the roasting pan (you will want these juices for the gravy). Your pan should look like the picture on the right.

Discard the apple (or any other large food items that were in the pan during the roasting). That dark stuff you see is not burnt - its well browned and will affect the final color of your gravy and trust me - this is where all the real flavour is. Sometimes the gravy is lighter, sometimes its darker – either way, its fantastic.



Pour the contents of this pan into a bowl or large measuring cup. It should make around 2 full cups. Let sit for 5 minutes so that the fat separates from the good drippings.

In this picture you can see that almost half the pan drippings are fat. Using a ladle, gently remove the fat and leave just the dark pan juices.

Now you are really ready to make the gravy. Take your 'empty' roasting pan and place it over a burner (in this case over both front and back burners) on high heat.



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Add two sticks of butter and whisk it hard, pulling up as much of the pan 'crud' as possible. All through this process you need to be constantly whisking in order to avoid any burning or scorching. As the butter melts and you dislodge the crud from the pan, it will be bubbly and brown.



Now start adding flour (from 1/2 to 1 cup). Keep whisking and working it in until it is bubbly, pasty texture. Keep whisking that flour/butter/crud mixture until you have a nice smooth roux. There should be no lumps of flour.



After about 4 to 5 minutes it should be thick and smooth. Remember that 1/2 a bottle of wine you were saving? Add the wine to the roasting pan. You should still have it on a high flame so that the alcohol will boil off. Keep whisking (the key to a nice smooth lump free gravy is to whisk the roux till its lump free and then keep whisking the other ingredients in so that it stays nice and smooth). Because of the high heat, it will be bubble constantly – so keep whisking to avoid it burning.



Remember that bowl of crud/liquid you saved from the pan and separated from its fat? Once the wine has been mixed in and reduced about 1/4, add in this liquid. This liquid imparts tremendous flavour.



Now that you've mixed in the crud, remember that stock you've been cooking all day? Start ladling that into the pan, one ladle at a time, continuing to whisk it in. Keep the heat on, bring it all to a boil. Keep adding stock till you have the desired thickness where you want it.



This is a picture of the gravy after addition of the crud and beginning to add the stock. Its still pretty thick and I'll continue to add stock till it hits the consistency I want.



The Big Finish

Take neck, giblets, heart and liver from the stock pot. Remove the meat from the neck (you'll be amazed how much meat there is). Chop it all up (meat, giblets, heart and liver) very finely and add it to the gravy.



In a small bowl, mix some of the stock with some flour to create a thickening agent. By doing this in a separate bowl, you avoid the problem of adding flour directly to the gravy with the intention of thickening it but in reality, you'll be creating lumps. If the gravy is too thin for your tastes, you can stir in some of this thickening agent till you get the gravy you want. Too thick? Simply add some more stock.



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Finish up your gravy by adding some salt and pepper to taste (or as my mom would suggest, some worcsteshire sauce). Final note, this gravy will not look like the creamy stuff from a jar, nor is it intended to, but I'll bet it's the best you ever had.

The End

So, here's the finished product; succulent, moist, juicy turkey with all the great flavour added by roasting in your charcoal BBQ - and the best tasting gravy you ever had.



Happy Charcoaling!