

# HOW TO BARBECUE A TURKEY



EXCERPT FROM *WEBER'S CHARCOAL GRILLING: THE ART OF COOKING WITH LIVE FIRE™*  
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# HOW TO BARBECUE A TURKEY



Several years ago, I converted from tasteless turkeys roasted in an oven to lightly smoked turkeys done on the grill. At first my method on the grill closely resembled what I had always done with the oven—325°F for about 15 minutes per pound. The results were pretty good, because of the woody aromas, but I still struggled with the fact that the breast meat was overcooked before the leg meat was done. Then I discovered brines, flavorful saltwater solutions that soak into the turkey and add enough moisture that you can cook the breast meat to higher temperatures than usual before it turns dry.

My next step in the right direction was to cook the breast meat more slowly than the leg meat. How? I start by cooking the turkey with the breast meat facing down in a pan of liquid. This way, the leg meat gets a head start, while the breast meat is shielded from the heat by the pan and the liquid. After an hour or so, I turn the turkey over to let the breast meat and leg meat finish together—both beautifully smoked and succulent. Oh, and by the way, the liquid that protects the breast meat makes outstanding gravy.



By arranging the charcoal in a half-circle on one side of the charcoal grate, you will create higher temperatures on that side. A drip pan filled with warm water will help you maintain the temperature of the fire, which ideally should be 300°F to 350°F.

## The Day Before



1. The wing tips have almost no meat and they tend to burn, so remove them at the joint with a sharp knife or poultry shears. Also remove the neck and giblets from both ends of the turkey. Reserve all of these turkey parts for the gravy.



2. To brine the turkey, arrange it, breast side down, in a sturdy plastic bag. Put the bag in a cooler lined with ice. Then pour the brine over the turkey.



3. Pull up the sides of the bag against the turkey so the brine almost completely covers the turkey. It is important that the breast is submerged. If part of the back is not, that's okay. No one eats the back, right?



## Barbecuing the Turkey



1. In a heavy-duty roasting pan, combine good-quality chicken stock with aromatic vegetables and the reserved turkey parts. Place the brined turkey, breast side down, in the liquid. Place the pan over indirect low heat and add wood chips to the lit charcoal for a lightly smoked flavor.



2. After the first hour of cooking, the turkey legs, wings, and back will be golden brown, but the breast will have barely begun to cook. Turn the turkey over and finish cooking it with the breast side facing up.



3. If any parts of the turkey turn dark, cover them with foil. Remove the turkey from the grill when the internal temperature reaches 175°F in the thickest part of a thigh (not touching the bone). Or check for doneness by cutting into the joint between the leg and body. If you see any pink meat, the turkey is not done.

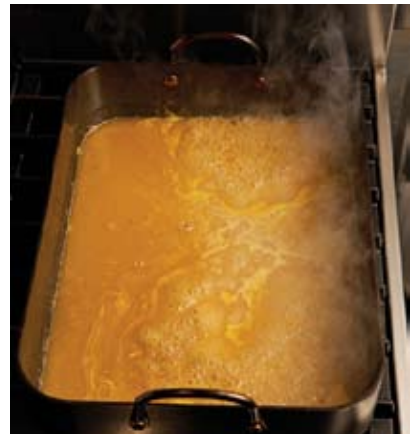
## Preparing the Gravy



1. After removing the turkey, strain the liquid in the pan. Then cook a roux, a mixture of flour and butter, until it turns the color of peanut butter. As you pour the strained liquid over the roux, whisk vigorously to break up any lumps.



2. The gravy will not thicken fully until it comes to a boil. Continue to whisk the gravy until it boils.



3. Then lower the heat and let the gravy simmer until it reaches the consistency you like. Taste the gravy at this point and adjust the seasonings if necessary.

## Brined and Barbecued Turkey with Pan Gravy

**Prep time: 30 minutes**

**Brining time: 18 to 24 hours**

**Grilling time: 2½ to 3½ hours**

### Brine

- 2 quarts apple juice
- 1 cup kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons dried rosemary
- 2 tablespoons dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried sage
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

- 1 turkey, 10 to 12 pounds, fresh or defrosted
- ½ cup melted unsalted butter, divided
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 6 cups reduced-sodium chicken stock
- 1 large yellow onion, roughly chopped
- 2 large carrots, roughly chopped
- 2 celery stalks, roughly chopped
- 4 small chunks apple wood or 4 small handfuls apple wood chips, soaked in water for at least 30 minutes

### Gravy

- Reserved pan liquid plus enough chicken stock to make 4 cups of liquid
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, cut into 4 equal pieces
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh Italian parsley
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

## Instructions

1. In a large pot combine the brine ingredients. Stir vigorously until the salt has dissolved.

2. Remove the neck and giblets from both ends of the turkey and reserve in the refrigerator for the gravy. Cut off and reserve the wing tips for the gravy, too. If your turkey has a trussing clamp, leave it in place. Do not truss the turkey. Rinse the turkey inside and out with cold water.

3. Partially fill a cooler with ice. Open a large, sturdy plastic bag in the cooler. Place the turkey, breast side down, in the bag. Carefully pour the brine over the turkey and then add 3 quarts of cold water. Press the air out of the bag, seal the bag tightly, close the lid of the cooler, and set aside for 18 to 24 hours.

4. If you are using a charcoal grill, fill a Weber® RapidFire® chimney starter to the rim with charcoal and burn the coals until they are lightly covered with ash. Spread the coals in a half circle or crescent-shaped fire on one side of the charcoal grate. Carefully place a large, disposable drip pan in the center of the charcoal grate and fill it about halfway with warm water. This will help to maintain the temperature of the fire. Put the cooking grate in place, close the lid, and let the coals burn down to low heat. Keep all the vents open.

If you are using a gas grill, preheat the grill on high until the temperature reaches 500°F. Then turn the burners down to *indirect low heat* (300°F to 350°F).

5. Remove the turkey from the bag and rinse it, inside and out, with cold water. Pat dry with paper towels. Discard the brine. Lightly coat the turkey with some of the melted butter. Season with the pepper.

6. Pour the chicken stock into a sturdy 9 x 13-inch roasting pan. Add the onion, carrots, and celery. Add the reserved turkey neck, giblets, and wing tips. Place the turkey, breast side down, in the roasting pan.

7. Place the roasting pan in the center of the cooking grate. If you are using a charcoal grill, position the pan so the turkey legs face the charcoal. Drain, then add 2 wood chunks or 2 handfuls of wood chips to the charcoal or

put the chunks or chips in the smoker box of a gas grill, following the manufacturer's instructions. Cook the turkey over *indirect low heat* with the lid closed for 1 hour.

8. After 1 hour, to maintain the temperature of your charcoal grill, add 10 to 12 unlit charcoal briquettes to the lit charcoal, using long-handled tongs to tuck the unlit charcoal between the lit charcoal. Drain and add the remaining wood chunks or chips to the charcoal or smoker box. Carefully turn the turkey over in the pan so the breast faces up. Continue to cook the turkey over *indirect low heat*, with the lid closed, for a second hour.

9. At the end of the second hour, baste the turkey all over with the remaining butter. If any parts are getting too dark, tightly wrap them with aluminum foil. Once again, add 10 to 12 unlit charcoal briquettes to the lit charcoal to maintain the heat of your charcoal grill. Continue to cook the turkey over *indirect low heat*. The total cooking time will be 2½ to 3½ hours. The turkey is done when the internal temperature reaches 175°F in the thickest part of the thigh (not touching the bone) and 165°F in the breast. *Note: The internal temperature will rise 5°F to 10°F during resting.*

10. Transfer the turkey to a cutting board, loosely cover with foil, and let rest for 20 to 30 minutes before carving. Meanwhile, make the gravy.

11. Strain the pan liquid through a sieve into a large fat separator and discard all the solids. Add enough chicken stock to equal 4 cups of liquid. Place the roasting pan over a stovetop burner set to medium heat. Add the butter and flour. As the butter melts, stir with a wooden spoon and cook until the mixture turns the color of peanut butter, about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add 4 cups of the reserved pan liquid (but not the fat) plus the wine. Bring the gravy to a boil, whisking frequently to dissolve the lumps. Lower the heat and simmer the gravy for a few minutes or until it reaches the consistency you like. If the gravy gets too thick, add more chicken stock a little at a time and simmer until it reaches the right thickness. Turn off the heat. Add the parsley. Add salt and pepper to taste.