

## “Smoke-n-Choke” Turkey (Brined and Roasted)

Hi Sausagemakers!

Here are two of the tastiest ways I know to prepare a turkey. The first is for brined-cured “smoked turkey”, and the second is for a unique way of baking a turkey that will cause your tonsils to smack the daylights out of your lips!

P.S. At first glance, it seems like a lot of Prague Powder Cure is being used. Remember, it is used to treat three gallons, work its magic, then it is poured straight down the drain – leaving an ideal 156 ppm. sodium nitrite.

### Chuckwagon’s “Smoke n’ Choke Turkey

(Delicious, Moist, Smoked Turkey)

- 2 gallons water
- 1 gallon 7-Up™ (soft drink)
- 2-1/4 cups powdered dextrose
- 1-1/2 cups salt
- 1 cup Prague Powder #1

Use **one** of the two following pickling methods:

The “Cover Pickle Method” - Dissolve all the ingredients in water chilled at 38-40° F. (3°C.). Wash the cavity of the turkey very well and raise the temperature of the turkey to 38-40° F. (3°C.) before placing it into the brine. The turkey should be submerged in the brine for at least 4 days at 38-40° F. A larger turkey will take about 5 days to cure. After curing, place the turkey in ice-cold water for three hours.

**OR...**

The “Spray-Pump Method” - Dissolve all the ingredients in water chilled to 38-40° F. (3°C.) Stitch pump the turkey with the curing solution using only 10% of the weight of the turkey. (If using a 20 lb. turkey, pump with 2 Lbs. of brine. A 15 lb. turkey requires 1-1/2 lbs. of brine, while a 10 lb. bird needs 1 lb. of brine). After pumping, place the turkey in ice-cold water for at least 3 hours. Remove the turkey from the water and place it into the remaining pickling solution at 38-40° F. (3°C.) inside a 38-40° F. (3°C.) cooler and allow it to cure 48 hours.

### Smoking And Cooking The Turkey

After the turkey has been cured then soaked in cold, fresh, water, place it into a preheated smoker at 130° F. (54°C.). Cook the turkey at this temperature for at least 1 hour with the damper wide open to help remove moisture. Close the damper  $\frac{3}{4}$  shut (only  $\frac{1}{4}$  open) and apply a trickle of light smoke for 5 hours at 130° F. (54°C.). Hickory with apple is ideal. Avoid heavy smoke such as mesquite. Raise the temperature to 140° F. (60°C.) and hold the temperature 4

more hours, then cut off the smoke. Gradually, raise the smoke house temperature to 180° F. (82°C.) and maintain the temperature until the internal meat temperature reaches 160°F. (71°C.).

Many folks prefer to finish baking the bird inside their home ovens following the initial smoking, serving it fully cooked. This is a moist and tasty option to the traditionally roasted Thanksgiving turkey... when not overcooked! Remember the “carry over effect” in which meat will continue to climb in temperature when removed from its cooking heat source. Removed from the oven when the meat temperature registers only a few degrees slightly above 160°F. (71°C.), turkey will generally continue to cook until it registers 170°F. (77°C.). Cooked further, the meat will be dry – most unprofessional! Use a dial meat thermometer, inserting the stem close to the ball-and-socket joint of the thigh, as this is the last place the meat becomes thoroughly cooked. Remove the turkey from the smoker and serve it hot with a meal or allow the internal temperature of the meat to drop to about 100°F. (38°C.) before placing it into the cooler for a day. Slice the cold meat thinly for sandwiches. Smoked turkey is a perishable product and should be kept refrigerated.

### **Timetable**

There’s considerable “up-front” preparation involved. Here’s a handy “countdown.”

<u>Action</u>	<u>Time</u>
Defrost – 3 days	Feast Day – 10
Cure – 5 days	Feast Day -7
Water soak – 3 hrs (morning) –refrigerate overnight	Feast Day -2
Smoking:	Feast Day -1
Pre-heat smoker @ 130 degF	1 hr
Dry turkey @ 130, 100% vent	1 hr
Smoke @ 130, ¼ vent	5 hrs
Cook @ 140	4 hrs
Cook @ 180	to IMT = 160
Rest at room temperature	1 hr
	(IMT will overshoot to ~170 degF)
Refrigerate	overnight
Slice & serve	Feast Day

## **A Unique Method For Roasting A Turkey Brining A Bird Western Style**

We have a distinctive way of preparing a turkey for holidays. We simply brine it in the soft drink **7-Up** (mixed in water with salt) overnight. I've often made a turkey brined in Dr. Pepper and one brined in 7-Up and let guests take their pick. I always include a bit of kosher salt to make about a 40° brine solution and place the turkeys in camping coolers (ice chest) just barely submerged in the soda pop. Then I fill the rest of the cooler with ice cubes and let 'em soak twelve hours. Beneath the ice, they are safe. I've baked them until the thighs register 160 degrees F., then removed them from the oven. They are allow to cool just a bit before being finished on a smoky grill finally bringing the temperature up to 170 degrees F. (77 degrees C.).

**Please note: More than 175 degrees F., (79 degrees C.) and a turkey becomes too dry. Lots of turkeys are ruined by cooks who think they can cook the bird to about 190F. (88 degrees C.) or so. Temperatures this high just ruin a good bird!** If you quit cooking the gobbler when the IMT reaches 170 F degrees (77 C.) , I guarantee the meat will be juicy - especially if it has been brined in 7-Up with a bit of added salt. The salt will actually go into the cells of the meat, change the structure of the proteins, then most of it will exit, allowing the retention of moisture. Its a great way to prepare a turkey. If you are pressed for time, inject the flesh with a multiple-orifice needle and soak it a few hours before you bake it. A little smoke goes a long way on the grill. Twenty minutes in heavy smudge in indirect heat should do the trick.

### **“Chuckwagon's Dutch Oven Turkey”**

(Classic Dutch Oven Roasted Turkey)

### **Preparing The Bird**

Choose a turkey allowing at least a pound per person then thaw it, under refrigeration allowing three to four hours per pound. Remove the neck and giblets for gravy. Reserve the liver for another use or discard it, then prepare the gravy base while the turkey cooks simmering the giblets in a little water for a few hours.

To roast the turkey, allow for baking time of 20 minutes per pound for 8-12 pound birds, or 15 minutes per pound for 12-16 pound birds. Elevate the turkey above the cooking surface (using a cake rack works well), and cover it loosely with foil. Note the turkey is dry roasting and the rack will keep the bird from braising in its own juices. Season the bird by rubbing it beneath the skin with olive oil, rendered bacon drippings, and a teaspoon of soy sauce mixed with salt, pepper, and onion and garlic powders.

Most turkeys are too large for the internal temperature of the bird to reach sufficient temperatures quickly enough to kill bacteria present in stuffing that has been refrigerated. For this reason, you should plan to prepare the stuffing separately or prepare and stuff the turkey immediately before the roasting begins.

The flavor of a turkey may be dramatically improved by stitch pumping (injecting) it. The pump resembles a large hypodermic needle you may fill with melted butter and bacon drippings, along

with all sorts of other favorite flavors including soy, Worcestershire, powdered spices, and salted broth. This prevents the turkey from becoming dry without the need for additional basting, providing the proper cooking times and temperatures are observed.

Slicing wide strips of salt pork or slab bacon, and laying the strips across the turkey breast, is another method of adding great flavor. Some western grannies start the roasting with the bird upside down, turning it over the last hour and finishing it off at a higher temperature.

### **Cooking The Bird**

The rule of thumb is to select a lower temperature of 300°F. (149°C.) if you allow sufficient time in advance and keep the bird moist by basting it every thirty minutes. This amount of heat works best, keeping in mind that the lower the temperature, the longer the cooking. Excellent results may also be achieved at 325°F. (162°C.) and once the temperature of the bird reaches 135°F. (57°C.), you may increase the oven temperature to 400°F. (204°C.) for a brief time for browning. At this point the turkey will finish cooking rapidly. If you decide to increase the oven temperature for browning it is important to pay close attention and constantly monitor the bird's internal temperature.

At 180°F. (82°C.) internal meat temperature, the white meat will be overcooked! A perfectly cooked bird requires the use of a thermometer, preferably, an instant-read, probe-type thermometer with an alarm. Nowadays we see the new-fangled pop-up timers. Forget 'em! The white meat will be overcooked and dry as it fully cooks at a lower temperature than does the dark meat portion of the bird. The best temperature for perfectly cooked white meat is 155-160°F. (68°-71°C.) with the probe place inside the breast. Be certain that the thermometer does not touch bone or the results will be inaccurate. There is absolutely nothing wrong with removing the leg portions, boosting the heat ten degrees, and allowing them to cook ten minutes longer.

**Goodness! I almost forgot the gravy!**

### **“Chuckwagon’s Tidal Wave Turkey Gravy”** (The Best Turkey Gravy In The West!)

This recipe has so much flavor in it, you may wish to just drink it! Best of all, it may be made ahead and used a little at a time.

turkey neck & giblets (without the liver)  
1 onion (chopped)  
1 tblspn. vegetable oil  
4 cups turkey broth\* (see below)  
2 cups water  
2 bay leaves  
4 sprigs of fresh thyme  
4 tblspns. butter  
6 tblspns. flour  
salt and pepper

\*If you are unable to make your own turkey broth, please use Swanson's chicken broth as it is made using onions, carrots, and celery. Hey, my reputation is on the line here! 🙄

To make the Tidal Wave **Broth**, heat the oil in a large black skillet, and brown the giblets (without the liver) and the neck until they are nicely seared. Add the onions, cook them until they are softened, and then remove the skillet from the heat for fifteen minutes. Re-heat the skillet, adding the broth and herbs, and scrape the fond from the bottom of the skillet as the mixture begins to boil before turning it down to simmer half an hour. Pour the broth through a fine-mesh strainer or cheesecloth and discard the solids. Store the flavored broth in the refrigerator two days or freeze it until you are ready to cook Chuckwagon's Tidal Wave Turkey Sausage and sourdough biscuits.

To make the Tidal Wave **Gravy**, heat the refrigerated broth in a pan, and then melt the butter in a shallow Dutch oven over medium heat, whisking in the flour to make a roux. Cook the flour and butter roux, whisking it until it becomes the color of dark honey. Add the broth to the roux, a little at a time, as you continue to stir it with a whisk. Simmer the gravy until it thickens, stirring it constantly.

Note: If you wish to use this Tidal Wave Gravy with a freshly cooked turkey, add even more flavor by scraping up the browned bits of fond left in the roasting pan as you reheat the pan on the stove. Deglaze the roasting pan with a bit of white wine or water and then pour the drippings into a fat separator. When it has cooled, stir the fond-flavored defatted drippings into the gravy for even more richness. Simmer the gravy two minutes, finally seasoning it with salt and pepper.

Good luck, Let me know how your turkey turns out.  
Best wishes, Chuckwagon