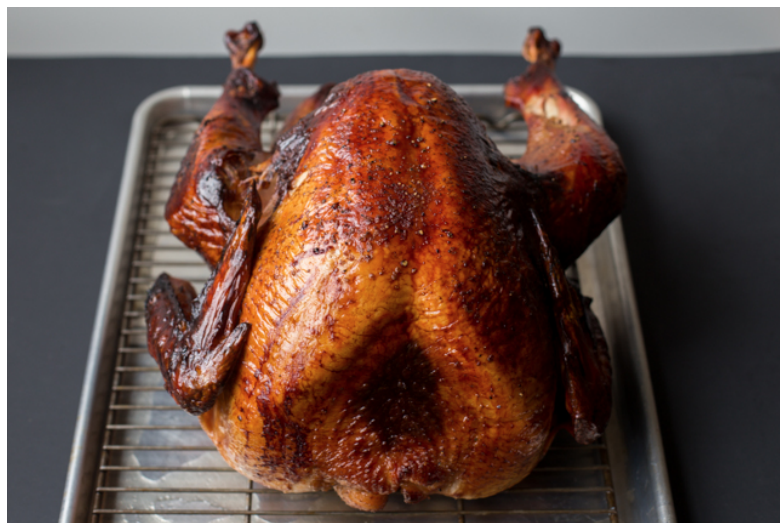


# Perfect Smoked Turkey

<http://wp.me/pWGRR-1pW>



*1 whole unfrozen turkey, 10-15 lbs, neck and giblets removed and set aside*  
*1 quart water*  
*1 cup kosher salt*  
*1/2 cup honey*  
*a bunch of ice cubes*  
*1 large handful wood chips, alder, apple, or cherry wood*  
*2-3 wood chunks, alder, apple or cherry wood*  
*rind of 1 lemon or orange*  
*1 small bunch each fresh sage and thyme*  
*1 small onion, quartered*  
*4 cloves garlic*  
*3 tbsp melted ghee*  
*1 tsp each kosher salt and black pepper*

*Serves 4-8 people*

Pour 1 quart water into your largest stockpot, add the kosher salt and honey. Heat the stockpot on high heat and stir everything together with a wooden spoon until the salt and honey are dissolved. Remove from heat, pour in a bunch of ice and stir everything around until the ice melts and the water turns cold, or at least room temperature. Add the turkey to the stockpot and fill with cold water until the turkey is fully submerged in the brine. Cover the stockpot and put it in the fridge (or a cold basement, between 32-40 degrees) overnight, up to 12 hours.

The next day, remove the turkey from the brine and dry inside and out with paper towels. Place it on a wire rack on a baking sheet to air dry for 30 minutes. If you have room in the fridge for the baking sheet and turkey, great, otherwise you can leave it out at room temperature.

While the turkey dries, prepare your smoking woods. In two small aluminum pans, place one handful of wood chips and a few wood chunks. Fill the pan that has the chips with about 1/2" of water. This will let the chunks catch fire and smoke first, and by the time the chunks are nearly done smoking, the water will have evaporated out of the wood chips pan and the chips will start smoking. So you'll get constant smoking without having to add chips. I would either use a combination of alder and a fruit wood, or stick with one fruit wood; mixing fruit woods just seems a little weird to me.

Place the small aluminum pans under the grill grates, on whatever side of the grill you're going to keep hot (my burners run horizontally, some run vertically; adjust as needed). On the cool side of the grill, place a large aluminum pan under the grill grates and fill with 1" water. This water will keep the grill moist but also catch the turkey drippings and can be used to make gravy afterwards (more on that later).

If you're using a charcoal grill, the setup will be similar, with your charcoal on one side, and the turkey and drip pan on the other. You'll want to use only wood chunks, and add more chunks and charcoal about halfway through cooking (I'll let you know when).

Prepare your aromatics for stuffing. Lemon or orange rind is better than actual fruit pieces, because you'll get the aroma without the added liquid inside the bird, which can mess up your cooking times.

Once the turkey has air-dried, stuff it with the aromatics, making sure there is plenty of extra room. If it's a tight squeeze, don't use all of the onion. Brush the turkey all over with melted ghee, starting with the underside of the turkey. It'll start to harden as you brush it on, which is fine. Get every nook and cranny you can. Season all over with kosher salt and fresh-ground black pepper.

Heat your grill on high heat for 10 minutes, until the wood chunks start to smoke. Turn off all the burners but one, and leave the one on high. Adjust the heat as needed to get to a stable 325 degrees. Once the temperature is stable, put the turkey on the grill and cover each wing tip with tin foil. This helps to prevent the wing tips from overcooking too quickly. Cover and smoke for one hour. As it smokes, take the turkey neck and gizzard (not the liver) and about 10 peppercorns and simmer them in a quart of water on low, which we'll use to make the gravy later.

After an hour, carefully pick up and rotate the turkey 180 degrees, so that its other side is now facing the hot side of the grill. Tilt the turkey towards its backside and drain out any collected liquid into the pan underneath it. Remove the tin foil from the wing tips. Cover and smoke for another 45 minutes. If you're using a charcoal grill, this is a good time to add more charcoal or wood chunks if needed.

Open the grill and pour out any of the turkey's collected liquid into the pan underneath it. Check the breast and thigh temperatures with an instant-read thermometer. You want the breasts to register 160F and the thighs to register 170F (they'll climb another 5 degrees as the turkey rests). If it's ready, pull it off the grill. If it's not there yet, cover and continue to smoke, checking every 10-15 minutes. My 12-pound turkey took almost exactly 2 hours to cook.

Place the turkey on a wire rack over a baking sheet to rest for 20 minutes before carving. Don't cover it with tin foil, unless you want soggy skin. Once your grill has cooled somewhat, carefully remove the grill grates and take out the drip pan. Pour the liquid into a fat separator, then pour the liquid (minus the fat, naturally) in with the turkey neck/gizzard broth. Fish out the neck, gizzard, and peppercorns and continue to keep warm on low heat.

To carve the turkey, remove each section individually – the breasts, thighs, drumsticks, wings, and drummettes. Then you can chop up the turkey as you see fit. I like to slice the breasts against the grain into 1/2" slices, and shave the thigh meat from the thigh bone. Here is a video I made a few years ago where I carved a chicken in a similar fashion. Be sure take any extra breast meat scraps you can pull off the carcass and chop it up finely to put in the gravy broth.

To make the gravy, make a roux by melting 2 tbsp of butter in a sauce pan and stirring in 2 1/2 tbsp of rice flour (coconut flour is okay but a little gritty), then toast for a couple minutes until golden brown, stirring frequently. Stir the roux into the gravy broth and season with a pinch of thyme, and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer on med/low heat until thickened, about five minutes.