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I'm convinced that while no one knows how long to cook a turkey, everyone has an opinion. When I was a kid, Thanksgiving morning started early. It was still dark outside but I could hear my parents in the kitchen in whispered debate. What got them up before dawn and engrossed in earnest and animated discussion? Not my sister's report card or my inability to toss a beanbag. Not even the state of the union, theirs or the country's. It was the turkey. More precisely, when to put it in the oven.

My dad worried that the bird would be undercooked and we'd all die of ptomaine. My mother worried that it would be overcooked and dry. Or maybe it was the other way around. The debate continues to this day but now the turkey is at my house.

Deciding how long to cook a turkey is both an art and a science. The day before Thanksgiving, I read the directions printed on the bird's shrink-wrap. Next, I grab *Joy of Cooking*, *Fanny Farmer* and *New Basics* and re-read what they have to say about roasting a turkey. Then I park myself in front of my laptop and visit the internet for more advice from *Martha*, *Food Network* and *Epicurious*. Finally, I Google *turkey hotline* and visit all the sites that pop up on my screen.

After all that, I have a mixed bag of different cooking temperatures, times and instructions. Based on all of this information and using sophisticated mathematical calculations, I figure out how long it will take to cook my turkey. No, not really. By then I have too much information and go back to the directions on the shrink-wrap. What choice do I have? Having wasted most of the morning; it's time to move on. I throw caution to the wind, commit to a start time, write myself a note in bold block letters on a florescent pink post-it and stick it on the microwave. Phew! Decision made!

After wasting so much time dithering, I finally get to work on the rest of the feast. I spend Wednesday afternoon peeling, chopping, mixing, pureeing and tossing. I set the table, reflect on Thanksgivings past and shed a few tears (onions).

Now that I host Thanksgiving, dinner is served closer to 5:00 than 1:00 and the how-to-cook-the-turkey debate begins post- rather than pre-dawn. My mother is just happy that someone else is cooking but my dad is convinced that I need his advice. He makes his first call to check on the turkey around 8:30 on Thanksgiving morning. To be fair, he also checks to see if I need help with any last minute errands and offers my mom's assistance peeling potatoes.

I tell him the turkey is resting comfortably in the refrigerator. After some discussion, I respectfully, or maybe not so respectfully, ignore Dad's advice. After all, he's not the one who spent most of Wednesday morning bouncing around the internet and leafing through cookbooks. After a bit of last minute second guessing, I finally kiss the bird and shove it into the oven. What's the worst that can happen? We eat at 5:30 instead of 5:00?

Bon appétit and Happy Thanksgiving!

*Susan*

### Roast Turkey with My Mom's Stuffing & Giblet Gravy

*The turkey is the crowning glory of every Thanksgiving table. Enjoy!*

1 whole turkey with giblets - depending on how much you love leftovers, 1 – 1 1/2 pounds per person

Butter or olive oil

1/2-1 teaspoon dried sage

1/2-1 teaspoon dried thyme

Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

1 carrot, cut in large pieces

1 celery stalk, cut in large pieces

1/2 onion, cut in large pieces

My Mom's Stuffing (recipe follows)

Giblet Gravy (recipe follows)

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.
2. Remove the giblets and neck from the bird. Don't let them intimidate you. They are in an icky, drippy bag in one end of the bird or the other. Save them to make the gravy (recipe follows).
3. Rinse the turkey inside and out with cold water and pat dry.
4. Stuff the turkey with My Mom's Stuffing (recipe follows) or your favorite stuffing.
5. Rub the bird with a little butter or olive oil, sprinkle with herbs, salt and pepper and put it on a rack in a large roasting pan; add 1-2 cups water to the bottom of the pan. Cover with foil, put in the oven and roast for 30 minutes.
6. Reduce the temperature to 325 degrees and continue to roast the turkey; basting every half hour or so. You can use the following as a guideline:

Pounds	Unstuffed (hours)	Stuffed (hours)
10 to 18	3 to 3-1/2	3-3/4 to 4-1/2
18 to 22	3-1/2 to 4	4-1/2 to 5
22 to 24	4 to 4-1/2	5 to 5-1/2
24 to 30	4-1/2 to 5	5-1/2 to 6-1/4

7. While the turkey is roasting, make the giblet broth (recipe follows).
8. As your guests arrive, allow them to add opinions and misinformation to the how-to-cook-a-turkey debate. Continue to baste the turkey with the pan juices.
9. About 1 hour before the turkey is due to finish, remove the foil. Throw the carrot, celery and onion into the bottom of the roasting pan. Baste every 20 minutes. (At this point the turkey cooking debate should intensify.)
10. When you think the turkey is done, wiggle the legs to see if they move easily. Poke the bird to see if the juices run clear. If you poke it enough times all the juices will run out and you will have a very dry turkey. Alternatively, use an instant read thermometer. Insert the thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh. As soon as the thigh reaches 165 degrees, remove the turkey from the oven.
11. Let everyone admire the bird. If the cooking time debate continues, smile and have a glass of wine.
12. Draft a volunteer to help you wrestle the turkey out of the pan and onto a large platter. Reserve the juices and vegetables in the roasting pan for the gravy. Loosely cover the turkey with foil and let it rest for 20-30 minutes. While the turkey rests, make the gravy (recipe follows).
13. Carve the turkey and arrange on a large serving platter. Scoop the stuffing out of the bird, add it to the platter or put it in a bowl and serve.



### My Mom's Stuffing

Enough for a 12 to 16 pound turkey

1 loaf (1 - 1 1/2 pounds) country bread, torn into large bread crumbs

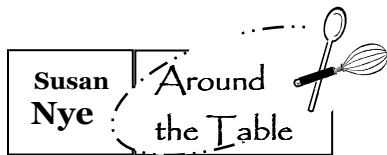
1/2 stick (4 tablespoons) butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

2-3 celery stalks, finely chopped

1-2 Granny Smith apples, cored and finely chopped

1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage or 1 teaspoon dried



1/2 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves or 1/2 teaspoon dried  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper  
1/2 cup (or more) chicken stock

1. Dry the bread crumbs a little by spreading them in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 5-10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, celery and apples. Season with herbs, nutmeg, cayenne pepper, salt and pepper. Sauté until the onion is translucent, about 10 minutes.
3. Put the bread crumbs in a large bowl. Transfer the vegetables to the bowl and toss to combine. Add enough broth to moisten the stuffing. Don't let it get soggy. Cool to room temperature and store, covered, in the refrigerator for several hours or overnight. The stuffing should be cold when you stuff the turkey.

*If you don't want to stuff your turkey, you can cook the stuffing separately. Transfer to a large, buttered casserole dish. Cover with buttered foil, buttered side down and bake at 350 degrees until the stuffing is heated through, about 30 minutes. Uncover and continue baking until the top is crisp and golden, about 15 minutes longer.*

### **Giblet Gravy**

Enough for a 12 to 16 pound turkey

Giblets and neck from the turkey  
4 or more cups chicken broth  
1 cup dry white wine, divided  
1 bay leaf  
1/4 cup flour

### **While the turkey is roasting, make the giblet broth:**

1. Put the neck in a small pot with 4 cups chicken broth, 1/2 cup wine and a bay leaf. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce to low and simmer, covered, for 30 minutes. Add the giblets and continue to simmer for 10-15 minutes. Remove from the heat and cool to room temperature.
2. Discard the neck and bay leaf. Remove the giblets; strain the broth and store the giblets and broth in the refrigerator until you are ready to make the gravy.

### **While the turkey is resting, make the gravy:**

3. Transfer the vegetables from the roasting pan to a blender, add the giblets and enough giblet broth to cover. Blend until smooth. Add the remaining broth and process to combine
4. Skim the fat from the roasting pan juices; discard all but about 1/4 cup fat.
5. Heat the roasting pan over two burners on medium-high heat. Add 1/2 cup wine and the giblet-vegetable broth. Whisking constantly, bring the mixture to a boil and deglaze the pan.
6. Meanwhile, combine the reserved fat with flour in a saucepan and cook, whisking constantly, over medium high heat for about 3 minutes.
7. Slowly whisk in the broth and juices from the roasting pan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer the gravy, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes. If the gravy is too thick or you think that you need more, thin/extend it with more chicken broth. Season with salt and pepper to taste, pour into a gravy boat and serve.

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