



Merry Christmas

Christmas Traditional Turkey

As a rough guide to choosing a turkey allow 500g of bone and flesh weight for each serving, weighed fresh, un-cooked and without seasoning. A 4.5kg turkey will serve 8 - 10 people quite generously.

Check that it fits into your oven!

The stuffing may be prepared ahead of time but there is a danger of food poisoning if you put it into the bird ahead of time (overnight) only stuff the bird when you are ready to cook it. You can fill the turkey in two places. The neck and body cavity.

When you fill the neck end push it up between the skin and the flesh at the top of the breast and back toward the neck making a nice rounded shape. Pack the stuffing loosely because it swells as it cooks and may split the skin. When you have a nice shape draw the neck skin down the back and pin it into place with two poultry pins (fine metal skewers)

When you fill the body smooth it into a rounded shape and cover the stuffing with a sliced bread crust, tucked under the skin at the edges. This keeps the stuffing in place and stops it getting dry.

Push a long metal skewer through the skin at the end of the leg furthest from you, through the parson's nose (tail) and then through the skin at the end of the leg nearest you. Use your hands and rub softened butter all over the body, add ground pepper or a little cinnamon.

Cooking the Turkey

Buy one metre of butter muslin (cheesecloth)

1. Preheat Oven 190c
2. Place turkey on its side on a rack in the roasting pan.
Dip cheesecloth into melted butter and drape over turkey
Tuck the ends inside the pan so they don't catch on fire
Place in preheated oven on the low rack.
3. After 1/2 hour turn onto its other side and re-arrange cheese cloth
Return to oven
4. After 1/2 hour settle the turkey onto its back, breast side up and replace cheesecloth. Return to oven
5. Allow 30-40 minutes for each kilo for fresh unseasoned bird up to 7 kg. Over 7 g. allow an extra ten minutes for each extra 500g. Start checking for doneness after two thirds of cooking time you estimate has passed. The turkey won't mind you checking and any hassle is preferable to a dried out bird.

Check how well skin is browning and reduce heat to 175c if you think it necessary. You may need to remove cheesecloth for the last half hour of cooking or leave it draped over the neck and thighs to prevent the skin from burning. If you use a meat thermometer insert it into the fleshiest part of the body away from any bone, next to the inside of the thigh. When it reads 188degrees F or 85C it will be cooked.

If you are worried the breast is cooked but the legs aren't take the turkey from the oven and rest in a warm place for ten minutes. Carve the breast for the first course and return carcass and legs to oven and cook for another half hour or until done.

Stuffing

You will need a food processor or hand grater to make the bread crumbs and a citrus zester

1. Oyster

Ing. One or Two Jars Oysters
Flat Leaf Parsley; coriander or dill
2 egg yolks, unsalted butter (125g)
Baguette, One Lemon,
freshly grated nutmeg
white and cayenne pepper
Maldon sea salt

Take a one day old baguette (French loaf) and tear it into rough chunks and whirl in processor for coarse crumbs. Weigh 300g and set aside. (Freeze rest)

Cream 125g softened unsalted butter with two egg yolks, add breadcrumbs, zest of one lemon, two tablespoons chopped flat leaf parsley, coriander or dill. Season with cayenne pepper, Maldon sea salt, freshly grated nutmeg and coarsely ground white pepper to taste.

Add one to two jars of oysters and sufficient of their liquid to moisten mixture. Fill Bird.

2. Fruit and Nut

- Ing. 100g day old loaf wholemeal bread
100g each of pitted prunes and dried apricots
100ml sherry
60g each of shelled pecan nuts and blanched almond kernels
two tablespoons unsalted butter
two brown onions
one stalk celery
one Granny Smith or Golden Delicious apple
flat leaf parsley, lemon thyme, oregano, orange marmalade
one firm fleshed ripe pear ground cinnamon seasonings
- a Roughly chop the prunes and apricots and fill into jar with two tablespoons of orange marmalade. Add sherry to cover. Cover jar and leave to macerate in a cool place.
- b Chop the nuts and toast on trays in 190 C degree oven for 10m until crisp.
- c Melt butter in pan and add onions peeled and chopped; chopped celery, apple cored and diced; pear washed cored and diced. Stir until transparent over medium heat. Cool and fill into a bowl, cover and refrigerate.
- d Cut the crust only from the loaf of wholemeal bread and dice. Mix the bread dice (100g needed) with four tablespoons flat leaf parsley, one tablespoon each of lemon thyme and oregano and the zest of the orange and store airtight in fridge

All this should be prepared well ahead and only mixed when ready to stuff bird

- e Combine in a large bowl; fruit and liquid; nuts; fruit and vegetable mixture; bread and herbs. Season to taste with ground cinnamon, Maldon sea salt and freshly ground pepper. You may wish to add more fresh herbs. Fill into bird.

3. Chestnut Stuffing

- Ing. Pork and veal mince (500g) 250g chicken or duck livers
Port wine, Madeira or brandy (one cup) one or two eggs
Spring onions Four Granny Smith Apples
Three cups breadcrumbs made from a crusty baguette
One can whole chestnuts naturel and one can unsweetened chestnut puree
1. Trim the livers discarding any 'green' parts or 'strings'. Place in bowl and cover with port wine, Madeira or brandy. Cover and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.
2. Peel and chop half the bunch of shallots (spring onions). Saute in unsalted butter until transparent. Scrape into a large mixing bowl. Add a little more butter to pan and add the four apples, peeled (if you wish) cored and diced. Stir over medium heat until half cooked. Scrape into a bowl and then add pork and veal mince to pan and stir until mostly grey and scrape into bowl also.

3. Add the livers, chopped and macerated and their liquid to bowl. Add three cups coarse breadcrumbs, whole or halved chestnuts and chestnut puree. Beat the eggs and add enough to make mixture hold its shape when squeezed together. Season to taste.

A Cheater's Gravy

Buy a can of Campbell's Chicken Consomme

Pour into saucepan and reduce it over a high heat while making a roux with 1.5 tablespoons of unsalted butter and plain flour. Cook, stirring over medium heat until the colour of a hazelnut's shell. Slowly stir in the hot stock. Stir over medium heat until smooth. Season to taste. Add cognac, brandy, Madeira, port wine, etc., if you like.

Glazing the Ham

Skin Ham using a short bladed sharp knife cutting around the ham between the rind and the fat. Gently pull skin from ham. Smooth the surface of the fat with knife and then score with a series of lines across the fat and then the opposite way so that you have diamond shapes. Cut deeply but not as far as flesh. Place a clove in the centre of each diamond.

Preheat oven to 190 C degrees and cook ham for forty five minutes while brushing with one of the following glazes.

Orange Marmalade Glaze

Brush ham with orange marmalade and bake 230 C degrees for ten minutes and then glaze again (300g marmalade total). Bake another ten minutes or until golden but not burned.

Apricot Glaze

Mix together one tablespoon Dijon mustard, 300g Apricot jam, one tablespoon King Island Cream, one tablespoon ground cloves, one cup fine home made breadcrumbs. Pat over ham and cook until glaze is golden brown.

Honey Glaze

Preheat oven to 200C degrees and mix together 1.5 cups firmly packed brown sugar, two teaspoons Ken's mustard powder, 3/4 cup runny honey. Brush mixture over ham. Place in oven and brush with remaining glaze after fifteen minutes. Bake until golden brown.