

# STORING & COOKING YOUR CANTER HILL FARM PASTURE-RAISED HERITAGE TURKEY



## STORING YOUR TURKEY

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A freshly butchered turkey has 10 – 12 days of “freshness” to be delicious but needs to be kept “as cold as a stone”. How do you do that? Although there’s no one way, we have a lot of experience with it.

First, we DO NOT recommend storing your turkey in your “main” refrigerator. It’s opened and closed too much to maintain a consistently cold temperature. If you have an extra fridge, please set it as cold as possible, and check it several times (with a thermometer kept in it!) to be sure it feels nice and cold, because the actual temp varies in different spots within a fridge.

My recommendation is the “bagged, iced and cooler-ed method”: Your turkey will come loosely bagged. I recommend putting that WHOLE bag inside a trash bag (or two) and filling that trash bag with some ice. I put that all inside a cooler and put it outside. I check it once a day to see if the ice has melted. If it has, I replace it and put MORE ice in there. The ice serves two functions: it keeps the bird extremely cold and helps you gauge the temp (if it melts, you know to add new ice to maintain the temp). I typically go through about 10 lbs of ice in the three to five days leading up to Thanksgiving, so I’m not talking about buying bags and bags of ice to do this – your own icemaker will likely suffice (but you’ll be cleaning it out daily). Even if you put your turkey into a fridge, putting it into a trash bag with ice is still a great way to ensure freshness.

### **IMPORTANT NOTES (TO PREVENT A MESS OR A PANIC):**

**Prevent Leaks:** Remember that the bag your turkey comes in is NOT water tight. It may leak. The trash bags also help prevent a mess of turkey juice in your fridge or on your floor.

**Manage the “Juices”:** Freshly killed birds WILL release “juices” and will continue to do so for a few days after processing. If you’re seeing a couple tablespoons of “juice” in your turkey bag, open it. Dump it out and use a twist tie or rubber band to tie the bag up again. The juices can develop an odor even while the bird is wonderfully fresh, so dumping them out helps prevent you from a panic attack if you open the bag and smell something less than appetizing.

**Turkey coloring:** Heritage birds are colorful creatures. Their feathers are dark red, black and striped. This means that their “pin feather” contain pigment. This pigment bakes away when you cook your bird, so you will NOT have a polka-dotted turkey, nor do you need to try to rid the skin of potentially colored spots. But if you’ve never cooked a heritage bird before and you see some little black spots (black is most likely), don’t panic. It’s totally normal and your bird will look AND TASTE fabulous when cooked.

## BRINING YOUR TURKEY

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Since 2015, I have been brining my turkey for less than 24 hours (using the brine recipe below), slathering it with Rosemary Maple Butter (recipe included) and draped with a cheesecloth soaked in 50/50 White wine and melted butter and then cooked. It has produced a fantastic bird each year. We do not give directions as to cooking time, because the feedback has been that online tables have largely proven accurate, and that variations are typically due to people’s stoves (and convection ovens), and you know that better than we do! For ease, we included a “cooking time by pound” table in these instructions that I have used for years, but please alter it based on your knowledge of your oven.

### BRINING:

1. The night before roasting, remove neck and giblets from turkey. Mix salt, lemons, oranges and spices with 3 quarts water together in a large bowl or stockpot; stir to dissolve salt. Let this liquid cool before pouring it INTO the bag holding your turkey. (I put my turkey into doubled trash bags and pour the brine into the bag). Then, return your turkey to its spot where you’re keeping it REALLY cold (for me, that’s back in the cooler).
2. Brine Recipe:
  - 1 Cup sea salt
  - 1 tablespoon of rosemary (I often use more)
  - 1 tablespoon of sage
  - 1 tablespoon of thyme

- 1 Gallon of water
- 2 oranges, sliced

*(Note: We do not recommend more than a 24-hour brine for Heritage turkeys, as it tends to “cook” them. I typically brine my bird overnight if I’m popping it into the oven early in the am, or I put it into the brine in the morning if we are planning to eat it at dinnertime. If you choose not to brine your turkey at all, consider using our recipe for Rosemary Maple Butter at the end of these instructions. You would mix this butter, stuff it between the skin and the meat of the turkey just before cooking, and then the bird “self-bastes” in this sweet butter).*

## PREPPING YOUR BIRD

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### TIPS:

- a. **TRUSS IT:** It's best to truss your turkey in order to have a nice looking bird (legs and wings tight to the body). Rather than spending 3 pages here, it's best to google "trussing a turkey", because a video is worth at least 3000 words. (Trussing is tying up the legs and fat flap and bringing it around the wings so that the bird stays nice and tight together for a great presentation).
- b. **BASTING:** I swear by a very easy baste of 50/50 white wine and butter. I melt 2 sticks of butter (1 cup) and then add 1 cup of a dry white wine like Sauvignon Blanc. I drench a piece of cheesecloth in this mixture and place it over the bird for the full roasting process. After an hour, and once every 90 min – 2 hours thereafter, I baste the bird with this mixture. Keep the cheesecloth on the **WHOLE TIME** you are cooking. The cloth will be dark brown but the bird underneath will be a gorgeous caramel color!
- c. **GRAVY:** I highly, highly recommend using root veggies (parsnips, onions, carrots and turnips) around the turkey for the whole roasting process. They break down to caramelized sweet chunks and I mash them into the gravy (you can blend them or simply put them in a mesh strainer and use a spoon to rub them so that they grind up and the liquid comes through the strainer back into your turkey juice reserves). It provides unbeatably rich gravy. (For a large turkey, I use 2 of each thing and 4 carrots – that's plenty). Remember to use turkey stock to ensure there is liquid **UNDER** the veggies (about 1 inch up their sides), or they will burn to your pan and you'll have to carefully scrape the tops of them off to avoid mixing the burned veggies into your gravy. You can also use water to do this – but stock gives more flavor 😊

## RECIPE FOR ROSEMARY MAPPLE BUTTER

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*1 stick (1/2 cup) butter      1/2 c. pure maple syrup      1 Tbsp fresh minced rosemary*

*Bring butter to room temperature and whip all ingredients together. (Doesn't that sound easy? It was!)*

### APPLYING THE MAPPLE BUTTER:

1. Rub turkey inside and out with salt and pepper.

2. Loosen the skin around the breast with your fingers and insert Rosemary Maple Butter between the meat and the skin as well as on the inside of the bird's cavity. *(Note: this part scared me last year. I was worried that I was going to detach the skin from the bird and end up with bare patches. I didn't. The skin of the Heritage bird is hardier than a commercial bird and didn't tear. The further you loosen the skin, the more area of the bird will be in direct contact with the butter, which is what adds the flavor. Loosen the skin as far as you can – just remove rings or watches first 😊)*
3. Set bird in deep roasting pan. Use a wire rack to lift the bird off the bottom of the pan.
4. Add chicken stock or butter/wine to the bottom of the pan. Using a sheet of oiled parchment paper, tent the roasting pan with the oiled (olive oil) parchment paper. *(For the past 2 years, I tend to prefer using cheesecloth – 4 layers (folded) instead, since it lets me baste it by “re-wetting” the cheesecloth).* Brush it on both sides with a pastry brush. The parchment paper is easily affixed to the roasting pan with a strip of foil on each end or you can use clean, oiled wooden clothespins. Remove parchment paper for the last 30 minutes of cooking for a crispy, golden skin.
5. Although the butter provides more of a “self-baste”, I still baste the bird at least once an hour if I use cheesecloth instead of parchment paper. I simply re-“wet” the cheesecloth with the juices from the pan OR more 50/50 butter and white wine (melted), if the pan juices are sparse or they’ve been absorbed by the veggies.

## COOKING TIME:

Size of Turkey	Unstuffed	Stuffed
<b>4 to 6 pounds (breast)</b>	1 1/2 to 2 1/4 hours	Not usually applicable
<b>6 to 8 pounds (breast)</b>	2 1/4 to 3 1/4 hours	2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours
<b>8 to 12 pounds</b>	2 3/4 to 3 hours	3 to 3 1/2 hours
<b>12 to 14 pounds</b>	3 to 3 3/4 hours	3 1/2 to 4 hours

**14 to 18 pounds**

3 3/4 to 4 1/4 hours

4 to 4 1/4 hours

**18 to 20 pounds**

4 1/4 to 4 1/2 hours

4 1/4 to 4 3/4 hours

**20 to 24 pounds**

4 1/2 to 5 hours

4 3/4 to 5 1/4 hours

# TURKEY BREASTS

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Remember, we are FARMERS, not chefs (I probably should have led with that, huh?), so the internet is still one of your best sources for cooking instructions. But since everyone asks us, I'll tell you how I do it.

I use the EXACT SAME method of a cheesecloth soaked in 50/50 white wine and melted butter to tent my bone-in turkey breast. We retain the backbone so that your breast HAS a cavity to either stuff with stuffing or veggies and lemons. I usually cut an onion, a lemon and throw in whatever fresh herbs I have (rosemary, sage, parsley), along with a generous shake of salt and pepper.

Heat the oven to 375 degrees. I choose a glass pyrex to cook my turkey breast, and drizzle 1 tsp of olive oil in it to prevent my bird from sticking. I put my stuffed bird, breast side up, into the pyrex and then lightly salt the skin and drape the wine/butter soaked cheesecloth FULLY over the breast, tucking the extra into the pyrex (I try to get it a under the breast so that I don't have a ball of cheesecloth sitting around the sides of the breast).

Cook for approximately 20 minutes per pound. Your goal is an internal temperature of 165 degrees for the thickest part of the breast, so PULL IT OUT when it hits 160, since it will continue to bake and raise another 5 degrees or so when sitting on your counter. If you put tin foil over it, it will increase a few more degrees, so if I pull it out at 155 – 158, I tent it with tin foil. I typically leave the cheesecloth on the breast until just before I serve it, as it keeps the skin crunchy but moist.