Fabulous Thanksgiving Turkey

A family-favorite dry-brined turkey · 12–16 pounds

I discovered this technique in a newspaper years ago, and once I tried it, I never went back to my old methods. It is simply the best turkey I've ever tasted! The secret is starting three days ahead.

Before you begin

Plan on a fully thawed turkey, approximately 12–16 pounds. Allow additional refrigerator-thawing time if frozen. Use about 1 tablespoon of salt per 5 pounds of turkey (approximately 3 tablespoons for a 15-pound bird).

My note: I've often been less exact about measuring the salt, sprinkling it generously over the bird. For consistent results, I recommend measuring it.

Sunday evening · Three days before roasting

Pat the turkey dry with paper towels. Sprinkle the cavity lightly with salt. Salt the breasts, concentrating on the thickest center portion. Turn the turkey on each side and season all over, paying particular attention to the thighs. The surface should be generously, but not excessively, seasoned.

Place the turkey in a large food-safe brining bag or covered container, breast-side up, and refrigerate at 40°F or below.

Wednesday · The day before roasting

In the morning, turn the turkey breast-side down. In the evening, remove it from the bag. The salt should have dissolved and the skin should feel moist, not wet. Set the turkey breast-side up on a plate or rack in the refrigerator, uncovered, for at least 8 hours.

Thursday · Roasting day

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Place the turkey breast-side down on a roasting rack in a pan. Roast for 30 minutes, then carefully turn it breast-side up using clean oven mitts or sturdy utensils. Reduce the oven to 325°F and continue roasting.

The original recipe estimates about 2¾ hours total, but cooking time varies. Use a thermometer rather than the clock: the thickest part of the breast and the innermost thigh and wing must each reach 165°F.

Transfer to a carving board, tent loosely with foil, and rest for at least 30 minutes. Carve, serve, and enjoy!