

My Turkey Plans



(Note : Updated 11/26)

I usually don't have to give much thought to serving Thanksgiving, since we've gone to my in-laws for the last decade, without fail. Aside from one year, when I decided to try and mix things up and do a deep fried turkey, my wife's grandmother usually takes care of all the details.

Well, this year, a surprise. Without really thinking through all of the ramifications, I dutifully entered the daily giveaway for a D'Artagnan organic, free-range turkey over on [Serious Eats](#) blog. I didn't really think about the possibility that I'd actually win. Well, win I did, and so just a day or two before we head out on the 8-hour car ride, this bird is going to show up on my doorstep. I'm assuming it will be arriving fresh, not frozen, and the contest claims it will be a 12 to 14 pound bird.

My plan is to put it into a brine almost as soon as I receive it (recipe below), tucked inside a large zip-lock, and surrounded by ice in a cooler, in which it will travel on the car trip. Then, based on the recommendations of [Gourmet Magazine](#), I went out and purchased one of those cheap-looking enameled turkey roasters with a lid. If all goes well, I will

roast it on Friday morning for our delayed holiday dinner. A 14 pound bird won't be enough to feed the whole crew, but we'll be serving a whole ham, plus the usual amount of sides, so I hope it'll all be enough.

Update: 11/26 – The bird arrived. 16½ lbs. It's brining now. I ended up making a double batch to make sure there was enough to cover the bird in the cooler.

Here's the brine recipe :

*2 quarts **apple juice or cider***
*1 lb **brown sugar** (dark or light)*
*1 cup **kosher salt***
*4 lbs **ice** (“a pint's a pound the world around.”)*
*1 quart **water***
*3 **oranges**, quartered*
*4 ounces **fresh ginger**, thinly sliced*
*15 **whole cloves***
*6 **bay leaves***
*6 **garlic** cloves, crushed*

Bring apple juice, sugar and salt to a boil over high heat, and add the ice to cool the cider down to room temperature. Add remaining ingredients, squeezing the oranges. Brine turkey for at least 24 hours. Quantity is sufficient for a 14 pound turkey.

Regarding brining bags ... don't scrimp. I originally tried using the 3 gallon zip-lock bags for my turkey, but it was too tight a fit; I was afraid huge sections of the bird were just sealed off from the brine liquid. So I went to a cooking supply store and bought bags specifically made for brining turkeys. Sure, they cost twice as much as the giant zip locks, but the bag is made of a thicker mil of plastic, and I felt like the double zip tops were sturdier and less apt to fail – which the zip lock bags did, a couple of times (one turn of the bird, and I lost half of the brine to the cooler). If you

are using a plastic bag, be sure to remove as much air from the top of the bag as you can before sealing it up.

What are your Thanksgiving plans?