



Spruced Up Turkey

These days, commercial turkeys and chickens too often lack flavor and succulence. Here is a way to make your Thanksgiving turkey or a simple roast chicken taste like those your grandmother might have raised on the farm. The spruce branches (taken from an ornamental blue spruce or Norway spruce) impart a delightfully wild and woody taste. Soaking the turkey overnight in a brine solution infuses the meat with exotic, fragrant flavors and plumps the bird. Don't feel obligated to include every single one of the ingredients for the brine if any are difficult to obtain. Rather, use the list of ingredients as a guideline and improvise as you wish.

Serves 12-24

For the Brine:

- 1 ¼ cups kosher salt
- 3 ¾ cups sugar
- 2 cups honey
- 2 lemons, cut in half
- 6 sprigs fresh parsley
- 6 sprigs fresh dill
- 6 sprigs fresh thyme
- 6 sprigs fresh tarragon
- 6 sprigs fresh sage
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 2 tablespoons mustard seeds
- 2 tablespoons fennel seeds
- 2 whole cinnamon sticks
- 5 whole bay leaves
- 8 whole cloves
- 1 tablespoon juniper berries
- 1 tablespoon whole cardamom pods

2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns
5 whole star anise
1 tablespoon whole allspice
1 two-foot long spruce branch, washed and cut into small pieces
1 one-foot long piece of sassafras root, washed and cut into small pieces (If you can't find whole sassafras root, 3 to 4 ounces of loose sassafras tea can be substituted.)
2 gallons boiling water

1. Combine all ingredients except the boiling water in a 5-gallon heat-proof container large enough to hold the turkey.
2. Pour the boiling water over the brine ingredients and let the mixture cool to room temperature.
3. Submerge the turkey in the brine, cover and refrigerate overnight.

For the Turkey:

1 fresh turkey, 18 to 20 pound fresh
A 2 by 2 foot square of cheesecloth
2 pounds (eight sticks) butter, melted and kept warm
Spruce limbs for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees.
2. Remove the turkey from the brine and rinse it off under cold water.
3. Place the turkey in a roasting pan. Carefully dip the cheesecloth into the melted butter and lay it on top of the turkey.
4. Place the turkey in the oven and roast for 3 to 4 hours, basting the cheesecloth with melted butter about every 30 minutes. The turkey is done when a thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh registers 160 degrees.
5. Remove the turkey from the oven and allow it to rest for 30 minutes. Carefully remove the cheesecloth and place the turkey on a serving platter. Surround the platter with the spruce branches.

