



eatwise

Roast buttermilk-brined turkey with gravy (serves 16–18)

Brining is marinating the turkey in a salt water solution with aromatic herbs and / or spices to add subtle flavour but the biggest plus is that this method adds extra moisture and tenderises the meat. Don't be alarmed at the amount of salt! You'll need a roasting bag to brine the turkey.

For the brine:

500ml water
3 good tablespoons coarse sea salt
2l buttermilk
1–2 onions
6 cloves garlic
4–5 sprigs fresh rosemary OR about 10 sprigs of fresh thyme
2 large oranges
2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns
4 bay leaves
2 tablespoons coriander seeds (optional)
1 tablespoon fennel seeds (optional)

1 tablespoon juniper berries (optional)

1 teaspoon mustard seeds (optional)

To roast the turkey:

6Kg (13lb) fresh oven ready turkey (with giblets)
2–3 carrots, washed, topped and tailed only
2 onions, quartered (no need to peel)
3 celery sticks (washed and halved)
1–2 tablespoons butter

For gravy

1 tablespoon plain flour
½ tablespoon cranberry jelly
water

1. Put water, salt, peppercorns, bay leaves, juniper berries and seeds (if using) into a saucepan, boil for a few minutes to dissolve salt and then leave to cool.
2. Meanwhile you can prepare the rest of the marinade: wash herbs and just 'bruise' them a little to release flavour; do the same with garlic, no need to peel, just crush lightly with back of a knife. Slice onions and oranges, add all these to the buttermilk in a large container or saucepan and when the salt water mixture has cooled, add this too.
3. Remove turkey from packaging, remove giblets from cavity and keep in fridge. Wipe surface of turkey with kitchen paper. Place large plastic bag (a turkey roasting bag is ideal) into a container

that will fit into your fridge and put turkey and brining liquid in, breast facing down. Leave in the fridge to marinade for 24–36 hours, turning once or twice.

4. On the day of cooking, remove turkey from fridge about 1 hour before starting to cook it.
5. Discard the liquid and pat the turkey dry with kitchen paper. Preheat oven to 190°C
6. In a large roasting tin, place the washed vegetables (carrots, onions, celery) and the turkey neck. These will help keep heat circulating under the turkey as well as adding flavour to the gravy.
7. Put turkey on top and spread butter over the turkey, especially the breast.
8. Cover loosely with foil and place in the hot oven. Reduce heat after about half an hour to 160°C.
9. Roast for a further 2 hours, basting once or twice.
10. Use meat thermometer / probe to check temperature in thickest part of thigh (avoid the bone) and thickest part of the breast, it should be 74°C (165°F). If it's done, move turkey to a large platter or board and leave to rest for half an hour, very loosely covered with foil, before carving. Meanwhile make the gravy:
11. Carefully pour fat off from roasting tin into a bowl to be discarded later when cold: the fat (or oil) will rise to the surface so if you hold the roasting tin and pour carefully from one corner you should get most of it. Look and see that the juices left in the pan are not oily – if they are you need to carefully pour off more oil.
12. Make roast gravy by placing the roasting tin on the hob over medium heat, sprinkle on the flour and keep stirring it in for a few minutes to cook it. If the mixture is sticking to the tin, reduce the heat a bit and add some water. Make sure you 'unstuck' all the tasty meat juices from the surface of the tin.
13. Add the cranberry or redcurrant jelly and stir in. Gradually add more water, stirring or whisking all the time until you begin to see the consistency you like. Strain the gravy into a saucepan using a sieve. Leave to rest and skim off any fat that rises to the surface as it cools. When ready to serve, reheat gravy, tasting to check seasoning before you serve.