

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcast. It seems like everybody has a favorite way to prepare a turkey, but personally I have fallen head over heels in love with brining. Brining deeply infuses the whole bird with this amazing flavor and makes it amazingly tender and moist. This is actually the method we've used with our homegrown turkeys for the past four or five years and I am hooked like I don't even care about the other methods. This is the one for me. So in today's episode I'm going to share my best Turkey brining tricks and tips with you. I am your host Jill winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people who feel uninspired by modern life. I'll help you create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. I feel like when I talk about turkeys, like when I was preparing for this episode, there's a lot of weird Turkey stories in my past.
- Speaker 1: [01:08](#) It's kind of crazy. So if you followed me awhile, you may have recalled some of these, but we've been raising turkeys for a while. There was the year when the Tom Turkey ate like 20 pounds of homegrown onions, like demolished them. And we had no onions that year. There was the time when I think it was the same time, he got really friendly and we, we ended up, it's the only time I've pardoned a Turkey. He turned into this watchdog and he would hang out with us and he would intimidate visitors. So if we had a ups guy come, he would like meet the ups guy at his truck and he scared the living daylights out of people and he never would attack them. But he was this big old Tom, you know, the big tail feather. And he'd strut out there and just intimidate with his presence.
- Speaker 1: [02:03](#) Like it was hilarious. Full grown men who wouldn't get out of their vehicles because of a Turkey. Like it still makes me laugh. And then there was a time last year when I recorded a video while we butchered our turkeys and it was tastefully done right. It wasn't gory or really bloody or anything. But I posted it on Facebook and for some reason Facebook decided to push it out to a larger audience and it kind of went viral. And so I had hoards of very, very angry vegans like attacking me for weeks over this Turkey video. And I'm like, Oh my gosh, Facebook. Of all the videos you had to promote, why did you do the Turkey butchering video? Like, Oh, my word and side note, if you're a vegan, no problem with that. I have lots of vegan friends. Totally do your thing.
- Speaker 1: [03:00](#) Just don't send me nasty messages please. Like please. Anyway, so heavy, strange past, a sorted past with turkeys. But anyway, we grow them every year, every other year rather. What I usually do is grow two turkeys. We eat one that year and then

we save another in the freezer for the following year. And that's what we did this time around. So we still have a Turkey in the freezer from last year. I wrap it up like a mummy, which is easier said than done because they don't fit into those nice little shrink wrap bags. So it's usually a bunch of freezer paper and some wrapping and some stuff. Anyway, it's not beautiful but it gets the job done and we do that every other year. So this is my favorite Turkey cooking/preparation method. And you can do this same method I'm going to share with you today with a store bought Turkey.

Speaker 1: [03:53](#)

If you have access to a locally raised Turkey or a pastured Turkey, this is a great method for those guys as well. But I especially like it with our homegrown ones mostly because I have this really bad habit of letting our homegrown turkeys get ridiculously large, like ridiculous. There's been multiple years where the biggest stress of Thanksgiving was if the stinkin' Turkey would fit into the oven. And I mean, I think last year it was, we had to take all of the racks out except the very bottom one and it was still like almost touching the top of the oven. So maybe do, as I say, not as I do with the whole Turkey growing operation. But all that aside, I can cook up one mean Turkey, so they're pretty darn good. And anyone who's eaten Thanksgiving with us can attest that. I especially love the brining method when dealing with pastured turkeys because sometimes pastured turkeys, they've moved around more, right?

Speaker 1: [04:59](#)

They've had more exercise so they may not be as a tender, as a Turkey, raised in confinement and fed a bunch of, you know, exclusively grains or corns. Also, the store bought turkeys, maybe not the pastured ones, but if you're just getting your standard run of the mill Turkey from the grocery store, they're usually pumped full, like they're injected with different flavorings and broth to make them more tender and moist. Okay. I just have to say this, every time I say the word moist, I feel like I'm going to make someone cringe cause I know like that's like one of the most hated words on the planet. I don't know what else to call it. Send me an email if you have an alternative word to moist. I would love to know it cause every time I say it I'm like, I bet this bothers someone.

Speaker 1: [05:47](#)

It doesn't bother me. Like it doesn't like the word doesn't bother me at all, but I know it's like a word that a lot of people hate. So anyway, total rabbit trail there, if you have a moist synonym, please send that my way and I will stop saying it just to be nice. Okay. Um, okay. So back to I'm totally like distracting myself. Um, moist turkeys. Oh yes. Store-bought turkeys tend to be pumped full of stuff. So we don't do that with homegrown

turkeys. Right? And when you get organic Turkey from the whole food store, they're probably not going to do that either. So brining, uh, helps to make sure your pasture raised turkeys aren't dry and tough. So here's how I do it. Are you ready? If you want to grab a pen and paper, you can. Otherwise I will link a blog post with the recipe printable format included in the show notes and you can just grab it there if you want to use this for your Thanksgiving meal.

Speaker 1: [06:45](#) So for the brine, you're going to start with a gallon of water, about a cup of salt. I usually use some sort of coarse, kosher salt or sea salt, half a cup of honey, five or six Bay leaves, a tablespoon of black peppercorns, and then a couple of sprigs of fresh Sage and a couple sprigs of fresh thyme. You can use the dried versions of that. I'd say about a tablespoon of each. Keep in mind, I do not measure this super carefully. It's more of just an eyeball and dump it sort of method. Also, you can totally make a brine without the extra ingredients. You can just use salt and water. That's technically a brine. I add the honey and the herbs and the spices just for a little extra flavor pop, but they're not 100% necessary. Okay. And the other piece of this recipe is the basting liquid, which I'm going to give you instructions for that in a second, but I don't want to confuse you, so we're just going to stay on the brine train of thought right now.

Speaker 1: [08:00](#) Okay. So you're going to take all of those ingredients that I just listed off, put them in up pot on your stove top and bring them to a simmer. Just a light simmer. And the only reason we're heating it is to make sure the salt is dissolved. We don't want it to be sitting at the bottom. Actually side note, what I often do is I'll take four cups of the water, heat it with the honey and the spices, and then add the remainder, the other three quarts of water to that. And the reason I would do that is it just takes less time to cool it down because we do not want to put the Turkey in the hot water. We want the water to be cool before we put the Turkey in it. The only reason we're heating it is to dissolve the salt.

Speaker 1: [08:45](#) So I kind of said that backwards, but pull it up makes sense. So you can just heat a small portion of the water, get that salt dissolved and then add it into the rest of the water. So once has had a chance to cool completely, pour the cooled brine into a large food safe container and add the Turkey into the brine. So this is usually the trickiest part is finding a container. If you have a normal size Turkey that a rational average person would purchase, you can probably fit the Turkey into a cooler, like a clean drink cooler or um, I've even seen people, brine in like the uh, rubber made drink. Uh, my gosh, I cannot even think what

they're made of or what they're called. Uh, they have the spigot at the bottom. You have there at sporting events. It's the thing that at football games they have a full of Gatorade and they pour it over the coach's head.

Speaker 1: [09:40](#) It's like the insulated drink thing. Like I'm being very descriptive. Can you tell I've written a book? No, you cannot cause I can't think of basic words today. Anyway, one of those drink thingys you can fill that up with your brine. Stick your Turkey in there. That's an option. A cooler is an option. A food grade five gallon bucket is an option. Whatever your Turkey will fit into. Another option that you can use if it's a smaller Turkey, if you have a big stock pot, you can line it with an oven bag. You know the type of plastic bags that you use to sometimes roast a Turkey or a ham. Line the pot with that bag pour the brine in, stick the Turkey in that. The reason we use the bag is we do not want the metal to be exposed to the soaking to the brine cause it could make it have some off flavors.

Speaker 1: [10:37](#) So the bag just keeps the brine from touching the metal. Um, whereas if you're using a cooler of sorts, then that's usually plastic and it won't leach any weird metally tastes into your turkey. Uh, anyway. So if your Turkey is large, this may not be enough brine so you can absolutely double it. And I often have to do that cause I have very big turkeys. So you put mr Turkey in there or mrs Turkey or trying to be, you know, fair inclusive here, mr or mrs Turkey. Um, if it doesn't want to stay submerged, if it's floating to the top, that's normal. You can put a plate or some other sort of clean kitchen item on top just to weigh it down. And then you're going to put the lid on the container and let the turkey soak in the brine for 12 to 18 hours.

Speaker 1: [11:24](#) So my time frame is, let's say Thanksgiving is on a Thursday. I never can remember how long they take to thaw. They take a long time to thaw. So you're gonna make sure it's completely thawed if it's frozen. And then on, um, Wednesday night or Wednesday afternoon before the big day, you're gonna start the turkey in the brine and then you're going to cook it Thanksgiving morning. So that's how I usually schedule it out. I usually will store my container. It's cold and you know, and Thanksgiving in Wyoming is always cold. So I will put it out in our shop. That doesn't freeze, but it's chilly out there. Or I will put it out on the back porch as long as it's not way below zero. And I just make sure I secure the lid down really well. So an animal, the dog or the cats or who knows what else is out there at night, doesn't come along and try to get into the brining vessel cause that would be a Thanksgiving day disaster.

- Speaker 1: [12:23](#) So I usually just leave it outside though cause it helps keep it nice and cold while it's brining. Okay. So after we have our 12 to 18 hours soak, we're going to pull the Turkey out of the brine and rinse it under cool water. Now this is important just because it removes the excess brine to make sure our finished bird isn't too salty. That can be an issue. I've never had any of my turkeys seem too salty, but I've had, I've heard of people complaining about that if they use too much salt or they don't rinse it. So rinse it off and then dry it off with a clean tea towel or paper towels. Cause we want the skin to be dry before it goes into the oven. Okay. Now we're going to take the turkey, we're going to set it on a rack in a shallow roasting pan.
- Speaker 1: [13:09](#) If you like, you can stuff it with some apples and some onions. Just for extra flavor. You don't have to, I personally don't cook my stuffing or dressing, I guess it would be called. If it's not in the turkey, I don't cook my dressing inside the bird. I cook it in a separate pan. So that's not an issue. We just stick it in the rack. I will tie the legs together with a bit of cooking, twine, butchers string, tuck the wings in. And then I make up some basting liquid. So I find that my Turkey doesn't always have enough juices as it cooks for me to baste as it roasts. So I make my own liquid. It doesn't have to be complicated. Here's what I do. I use about a cup and a half of broth, just whatever homemade broth I have in the fridge, chicken, beef, whatever.
- Speaker 1: [13:58](#) I like to add about a half a cup of Apple cider or Apple juice into the basting liquid. Just to get a little sweetness, I will add about a quarter teaspoon of black pepper. You can also add different herbs. Here's my little trick. I like to add essential oils into my basting liquid because they're liquid, right? They're going to be disbursed in that very well and they're very intense in flavor. So you don't have to do this. It's completely optional and you will need a very high quality sort of oil that is considered to be food grade, right? So I use wild orange oil, about six drops. I will use four drops of lemon essential oil and four drops of thyme essential oil, and I mix it into my basting liquid. I pour that into the bottom of the roasting pan and into the oven it goes. So cooking times with your Turkey is going to vary.
- Speaker 1: [14:57](#) I plan on about 13 to 15 minutes per pound. So definitely do the math because if you have a monster Turkey like I do, it will take longer than you think, I promise. And the last thing you want is of course the rest of Thanksgiving dinner to be ready that Turkey has three hours to go. So make sure you do the math. Um, 13 to 15 minutes per pound. I like to base the Turkey about every 45 to 60 minutes. I'll just grab from that liquid in the bottom, squirt it back over the top. If the breasts I forgot to

mention, I usually do it breast side up, but if it gets too brown as the Turkey's roasting and it's still not cooked in the middle, but the breast is starting to get super brown, you can cover it with foil just to shield it.

Speaker 1: [15:43](#) And I usually do this about two thirds of the way through the cooking process. So when mr Turkey is at 165 degrees at the thickest part of the Turkey, usually I jabbed the thermometer into the drumstick. You're ready to roll, pull it out, let it rest, and then slice into that baby. It's so good. Now, little note about the gravy. Some people I've heard caution against making gravy with the drippings from a brined Turkey just because it can be really salty as the salt inside the bird kind of seeps into the bottom of the pan into those drippings. It can be extra, extra salty. That being said, whenever I've made my recipe, it makes amazing gravy. I have never had the issue of it being too salty. So my suggestion is as you gather the drippings to make the gravy, and get it going on the stove, if you don't know how to make gravy, I have a very simple recipe in my Prairie homestead cookbook cause it is a must that all homestead cooks know how to make their own gravy super easy and so much better than the packets or the canned gravy.

New Speaker: [16:54](#) Like who even does that? Don't do that. Don't do the canned gravy, my friend. You can do better is so easy to make real gravy. Um, okay. Not shaming gravy buyers. I'm just saying like, it's not hard to make it yourself, so encouraging you that you can do it. You don't have to buy it this year. As you are cooking your gravy, taste it frequently to check the saltiness level. I'm guessing you probably will not need to add additional salt if you're tasting it and it's way too salty, you can still salvage it. You just want to add a little bit of broth that you have in the fridge.

Speaker 1: [17:29](#) Hopefully homemade broth. Add that to dilute it a little bit and disperse the saltiness and you should be just fine. But honestly, this makes fantastic gravy. The sweetness of the Apple cider and the basting liquid helps give that the gravy, a little bit of sweetness. It's so amazing. So anyway, we should be fine with your gravy. And lastly, don't forget to save your Turkey bones for broth, right? So, um, after we eat the meal and everyone goes home or everyone's like laying on the couch like a beached whale, cause we're all so uncomfortable from eating so much, I usually go into the kitchen, I'll pull all the meat off the Turkey and then I will stick it in a pot with some vegetables and water and herbs and we'll start the broth process. And I can get usually about one to two gallons off a Turkey, a gallons of broth, depending on how big the Turkey is, but it's one of the best

parts of Thanksgiving because then you have broth for many, many weeks to come if you freeze it or can it and it's basically free. So that is the extent of my Turkey secrets I suppose. And I hope you give it a try. Let me know how it works for you and happy Thanksgiving.

Speaker 1:

[18:51](#)

So if you're falling in love with the idea of an old fashioned intentional kitchen full of nourishing food and rich memories, you will love my heritage cooking mini class. I've taken three of my most popular videos from my heritage cooking crash course and I'm giving them to you for free just for being a part of my tribe. These videos will have you cooking and eating like a farmer in no time at all. Even if you live in this city, you can get instant access to these free videos over at [www.homesteadcookingclass.com](http://www.homesteadcookingclass.com). I'll leave that link in the show notes, but just one more time. It's [www.homesteadcookingclass.com](http://www.homesteadcookingclass.com) okay, my friend. I have some good news for you. You are not a weirdo. It feels good to hear that right, but if you have had these strange urges to make yogurt or to culture buttermilk or to try your hand at some homemade mozzarella, well, you're in good company.

Speaker 1:

[19:58](#)

The tough part is that sometimes it's almost impossible to find home dairy supplies locally, which is why I have come to rely heavily on the new England cheesemaking supply company. They are my absolute lifeline for everything. I need to make all the dairy stuff in my kitchen from cultures to equipment to supplies they've got it, and to make your life easier. I put together a free quick start guide that includes not only my favorite home dairy recipes, a list of the cultures that I use the most, but we put a little discount code in there for you as well. Head over to the [Prairie homestead.com/cheese](http://Prairiehomestead.com/cheese) to check it out and that's it. If you have a minute, I'd be so honored if you'd pop over to your favorite podcast player. Leave a quick review and hit subscribe so more people can find this podcast and bring homesteading into their lives. Thanks for listening and I'll catch up with you next time on the next episode. Happy home studying friends.