

Mayo-Roasted Thanksgiving Turkey With Gravy

By J. Kenji López-Alt

Time About 2 hours, plus overnight dry-brining

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (812)



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Some recipes for mayo-roasted turkey promise extra-juicy results with minimal effort. This one does no such thing. The mayonnaise won't help the turkey stay juicy: Only salting and resting (a light curing process known colloquially as dry-brining) and carefully monitoring its internal temperature as it roasts will. The mayonnaise will, however, produce a turkey with glistening, burnished, golden-brown skin evenly flavored with herbs, no basting required. The mayo's viscosity helps it stay in place as it roasts, while the extra protein from egg aids in browning. This recipe will make a little more mayonnaise than you'll need. Use the excess for leftovers sandwiches, or toss it with roughly chopped vegetables (carrots, broccoli, brussels sprouts, zucchini or squash) before roasting at high heat for 10 to 15 minutes.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 10 to 14 servings

For the Turkey

1 (10- to 14-pound) whole turkey, backbone removed, neck, giblets and backbone reserved for the gravy (see Tips)

½ cup kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal) or 6 tablespoons coarse salt (such as Morton's)

2 celery ribs, diced

1 large onion, diced

1 large carrot, diced

For the Herb Mayo (see Tips)

1½ cups mayonnaise (such as Hellmann's or Best Foods)

1 cup loosely packed fresh parsley leaves, stems reserved

½ cup loosely packed fresh sage leaves, stems reserved

2 tablespoons fresh thyme or oregano leaves, stems reserved

2 scallions, roughly chopped

PREPARATION

Step 1

Dry-brine the turkey: Pat the turkey dry with paper towels. Carefully loosen the skin from the breast of the turkey — going in through the neck may be easier here — until you can slide your hand between the skin and the meat. Season each turkey breast with 1 teaspoon salt, spreading it as evenly as possible with your hands. Sprinkle the remaining salt evenly over every surface of the turkey. Place the turkey skin-side up on a rimmed sheet pan, and refrigerate, uncovered, for 12 to 24 hours.

Step 2

While the turkey dry-brines, make the herb mayo: In a tall container just wide enough to fit the head of a hand blender (or using a regular blender or food processor), combine the mayonnaise with the parsley, sage, thyme or oregano, scallions, lemon zest and 1 tablespoon water. Season generously with salt and pepper. Use the hand blender to blend until it all forms a relatively smooth, pale-green sauce. Transfer to a sealed container until ready to use. You should have about 1¾ cups of herb mayo. (You can make the mayo in advance up to a week and keep it in the fridge.)

Step 3

Roast the turkey: Take the turkey out of the refrigerator to let it rest as the oven heats. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat the oven to 425 degrees for a 10- to 12-pound bird or 400 degrees for a 12- to 14-pound bird. Line a sheet pan with aluminum foil. Scatter the diced celery, onion and carrot over it. Place a cooling rack directly on top of the vegetables, then place the turkey on top, skin-side down.

Step 4

1 lemon, zested

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the Gravy

2 teaspoons neutral oil, such as vegetable, light olive oil or canola

2 celery ribs, roughly chopped

1 large onion, diced

1 large carrot, roughly chopped

Reserved backbone and any neck or giblets from the turkey, roughly chopped

1½ quarts homemade or store-bought low-sodium chicken or turkey stock

Reserved herb stems from the Herb Mayo

2 bay leaves

¼ cup all-purpose flour

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 tablespoon soy sauce

With your hands, slather ½ cup of the herb-mayo mixture over the exposed side of the turkey, making sure to lightly coat every surface. Flip the turkey skin-side up. Spread the legs out to the sides (they should remain skin-side up) and tuck the wing tips behind the breast. With your hands, spread a couple of tablespoons of the herb mayo between the skin and meat of the breast. Generously slather the rest of the turkey with the herb mayo, getting it into every crack and crevice. (Reserve any remaining herb mayo for your day-after-Thanksgiving sandwiches.)

Step 5

Transfer the turkey to the oven and roast until the breast meat registers 150 degrees at its coolest point (typically the deepest point of the breast next to the breastbone) and the thigh and leg meat register at least 165 degrees at their coolest point (typically the center of the joint between the drumstick and thigh or thigh and hip), 80 to 90 minutes, rotating halfway through. (You may want to start checking the turkey's internal temperature after about 1 hour.) If any of the skin starts to darken too much during roasting, tent darker areas loosely with aluminum foil. Remove from oven, transfer to a cutting board, and let it rest.

Step 6

While the turkey roasts, make the gravy: Heat the oil in a large saucepan over high until lightly smoking. Add the celery, onion, carrot and turkey parts, and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, about 15 minutes. Add the stock, herb stems and bay leaves. Bring to a simmer and cook gently until reduced by about half, or until the turkey is done.

Step 7

After removing the turkey from the oven, strain the stock mixture through a fine-mesh strainer into a large bowl. Tilt and strain any collected liquids from the turkey-roasting tray into the same bowl. Discard the vegetables at the bottom of the tray. Skim off and discard most of the excess fat from the liquid.

Step 8

Heat the flour and butter in a medium saucepan over medium, stirring constantly with a whisk until the mixture is golden brown. Ladle the stock mixture into the saucepan, about a ½ cup at a time, whisking until smooth after each addition. Once all the stock is added, bring the gravy to a simmer until your desired consistency, stir in the soy sauce and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Step 9

Carve and serve the turkey with the gravy.

Tips

If spatchcocking intimidates, you can cook the turkey whole. Place a baking stone or steel directly on an oven rack set in the lowest position when heating your oven in Step 4. (Let it preheat for at least 45 minutes.) Place the whole turkey, breast-side up on the rimmed baking sheet. Roast as directed in Step 6 for 30 minutes, then reduce heat to 350 degrees, and continue roasting, tenting with aluminum foil if the skin starts brown too quickly, until the breast meat registers 150 degrees at its coolest point and the thigh and leg meat register at least 165 degrees at their coolest point, another 80 to 100 minutes. Remove from oven, transfer turkey to a cutting board as soon as you can handle it, then continue recipe as directed from Step 7.

You can make the herb mayo from scratch, if you like. In a tall container just wide enough to fit the head of a hand blender, combine 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard, 3 medium garlic cloves, 1 whole egg, and the zest and juice of 1 lemon. Top with 1 cup neutral oil, such as vegetable, light olive oil or canola, so that the oil forms a distinct layer. Place the head of a hand blender firmly at the bottom of the container. (The garlic cloves should be entirely within the business-end of the blender.) Turn on the blender and, over the course of 15

seconds, slowly pull it up through the oil. A thick, stable mayonnaise should form. Remove the blender, shaking off most of the excess mayonnaise back into the jar. Proceed with the recipe.

Private Notes

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