

Thanksgiving Recipes

Brined, Herb Roasted Turkey

I'll admit brining is a pain. But with easily dried-out meats such as poultry and fish it can be a lifesaver, especially if you have a tendency to get distracted and overcook your meats. Brining is the process of soaking meat in a salt solution. The saltwater is absorbed into the meat, adding extra moisture. There is also a slight denaturing of the protein from its reaction to the brine, leading to a structural change that actually ends up trapping more moisture into the meat while cooking. The result is that the turkey will hold onto more juices and flavor than it would otherwise. Once you try brining, it will be hard to go back to the old way of doing things. This recipe has been adapted from one I found by celebrity chef Emeril. For the insatiably curious, you can read about brining from a food scientist here: Finecooking.com

Brine

- 1 cup salt
- ¼ cup molasses
- ¾ cup sucanat or coconut sugar
- 2 oranges, skins scrubbed thoroughly and cut in quarters
- 2 lemons, skins scrubbed thoroughly and cut in quarters
- 6 sprigs thyme
- 4 sprigs rosemary
- 1 (10 to 12-pound) turkey
- 1 large orange, scrubbed and cut into 1/8ths
- 4 tablespoons refined coconut oil (refined oil has less coconut flavor) OPTIONAL: sub unsalted butter at room temperature
- Salt and pepper
- 1 large yellow onion, cut into 1/8ths
- 1 stalk celery, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 large carrot, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 1/2 bunch sage
- 3 or 4 sprigs parsley
- 1 1/2 to 2 cups chicken or turkey stock, for basting

To make the brining solution, dissolve the salt, molasses and sugar in 2 gallons of cold water in a nonreactive container (such as a clean bucket or large ceramic stockpot, or a clean, heavy-duty, food grade plastic storage bag). Add the oranges, lemons, thyme, and rosemary. Note: if you have a big turkey and need more brine than this, use 1/2 cup salt and 1/2 cup sucanat for every gallon of water.

Remove the neck, giblets, and liver from the cavity of the turkey. (These can be incorporated into a soup stock with the carcass or roasted separately and enjoyed.) Rinse the turkey inside and out under cold running water.

Soak the turkey in the brine, covered and refrigerated, for at least 4 hours and up to 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

Remove the turkey from the brine and rinse well under cold running water. Pat dry with paper towels both inside and out. Place turkey, breast side up, in a large, heavy roasting pan. Rub breast side with orange segments and rub on all sides with the coconut oil or butter, stuffing some underneath the skin. Season lightly inside and out with salt and pepper. Stuff the turkey with the onion, remaining orange, celery, carrot, bay leaves, thyme, rosemary, sage and parsley. Loosely tie the drumsticks together with kitchen string. Roast the turkey, uncovered, breast side down for 1 hour.

Remove from the oven, turn, and baste with 1/2 cup stock. Continue roasting with the breast side up until an instant-read meat thermometer registers 165 degrees F when inserted into the largest section of thigh (avoiding the bone), about 2 3/4 to 3 hours total cooking time. Baste the turkey once every hour with 1/2 to 3/4 cup chicken or turkey stock. Remove from the oven and place on a platter. Tent with aluminum foil and let rest for 20 minutes before carving.

Aimee's Easy Mashed Cauliflower

Makes about 7 cups.

- 2 heads cauliflower
- 1 qt. vegetable broth
- 1 tbsp butter or olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Tear florets from the cauliflower head and add to a large stock pot. Cover with broth, bring to a boil and steam until very tender – about 15 minutes. Transfer florets into Vitamix (this makes them super creamy!) or a food processor. Add butter or oil, salt and pepper, and any spices you wish to use. Puree on high for 30 seconds – 2 minutes until smooth. Transfer to a warmed ceramic dish and serve.

Elana's Herb Gravy

- 1 quart chicken stock or broth
- 2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic
- pan drippings (from roasted chicken or turkey)
- ½ teaspoon celtic sea salt
- 1 tablespoon thyme, chopped

In a medium saucepan, heat chicken stock, onions and garlic to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until onions and garlic are soft, about 30 minutes. Pour pan drippings into saucepan. Blend stock-onion-drippings mixture in a Vitamix until smooth. Place mixture back in saucepan and reheat, then season with salt and thyme. Serve over turkey, mashed cauliflower, or anything else. This recipe has been straight up stolen from Elana's Pantry. View her blog at <http://www.elanaspantry.com> I hope to have mastered my own gravy recipe by next year!

Bacon Maple Carmelized Brussels Sprouts with Cranberries

I blame my bacon-loving friend Gavin for the presence of bacon in this holiday meal. His affinity for pork has led to a permanent association of bacon and Brussels sprouts in my mind.

- 2 lbs Brussels sprouts
- 2 slices thick cut bacon
- 1/3 cup real maple syrup
- 1 cup cranberries or 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 2 Tbsp bacon fat (drained from bacon)
- kosher salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste

Cook bacon, draining and reserving fat. Cut large sprouts in half. In a large bowl, toss fresh cranberries and brussel sprouts in fat and maple syrup. Sprinkle with salt and fresh paper. Roast for 15-20 minutes, until the edges are browned.

While the sprouts are roasting, chop the bacon into small pieces. Remove sprouts from oven and add bacon (and dried cranberries, if using instead of fresh) to roasted sprouts.

Spinach Salad with Sautéed Chanterelles, Kohlrabi and Dressed with an Apple Cider Dressing

If the bacon in this salad would be overkill in your holiday meal, it is easily omitted.

Serves 4

- 2 tablespoons minced shallot
- 2 tbsp. butter or coconut oil
- 1/2 cup Kohlrabi, peeled and cut into matchsticks
- One massive handful sliced Chantrelles
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup apple cider
- 1 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
- 1 tablespoon flax oil
- 1 pound fresh spinach, coarse stems discarded and the leaves washed well and spun dry
- (Optional: 4 slices of turkey or pork bacon, cooked until crisp and chopped fine)

Sauté the shallot, kohlrabi and mushrooms in a large skillet with coconut oil or butter over medium heat, stirring for 5 minutes. Remove from the pan.

Add the vinegar and cider to the pan and boil the mixture, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes, or until it is reduced to about 1/2 the volume. Whisk in the mustard, flax oil, and salt and pepper to taste. In a large bowl toss the spinach with the warm dressing until it is just wilted and sprinkle the salad with the mushrooms and kohlrabi mixture. Add bacon, if desired. Serve immediately. This recipe is adapted from epicurious.com

Easy Peasy Cranberry Sauce

- 1 bag of fresh cranberries
- Zest of 1 organic orange (keep wax out of your cranberry sauce, I always say!)
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup honey

Bring to a slow boil and then simmer for 10-20 minutes, until thickened. It will continue to thicken as it cools.

Pumpkin Gingerbread Cake with Maple-Vanilla Frosting

Cake

- 1 cup pumpkin puree (NOT pumpkin pie filling)
- 1 cup almond or cashew butter
- 3 tbsp. maple syrup
- 2 tbsp. blackstrap molasses
- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon cardamom
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest

Frosting

- 1/3 cup coconut manna
- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 1/2 tablespoon honey
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Optional

- Pecan halves or whole almonds for garnish

Preheat oven to 350F.

Make the cake. In a medium sized bowl, combine all the cake ingredients and mix thoroughly to combine. Pour into an 8x8 oven-safe baking dish. Bake until completely cooked through, about 30 minutes.

Make the frosting. Place the coconut manna and coconut oil in small saucepan over low heat. Mix until softened, but not melted. It's a delicate balance. Place the manna and oil mixture in a large mixing bowl, then add the honey, maple syrup, and vanilla extract. Beat until fluffy with a standing or hand mixer.

Assemble! Allow the cake to cool completely. Impatience will be disastrous. Let it sit for several hours or even overnight. Cutting into a warm grain-free cake results in a crumbled mess that may make you cry. Once the cake is cooler than a cucumber, slice it into squares. Dollop a spoonful of frosting onto each square and top with an almond or pecan 5. Chill out. When all squares are frosted, cover lightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate. The frosting will firm up in the fridge and the texture transforms into a confection. Serve the cake squares chilled or at room temperature.

This recipe has been adapted from the incredibly awesome **Melissa Joulwan, author of Well Fed** ([available here on Amazon.com](#))

Pumpkin Pie with Pecan Crust

I grew up with Pumpkin Pie made from the recipe on the back of Libby's Canned Pumpkin. I don't know if it was Mom's extra touch of love or just that the recipe is damn genius, but to date it is still the best pumpkin pie I've ever had. This recipe is my effort to take a timeless holiday favorite and clean it up for my own digestive and dietary needs.

Pie

- 3/4 cup granulated sweetener, such as sucanat or coconut sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 large eggs
- 15 oz. Pumpkin (canned or freshly baked)
- 1 can (16 oz) FULL FAT coconut milk

Crust

- 8 oz whole pecans, ground
- 1 ½ tbsp. butter, softened (use coconut oil if dairy-free)

Grind the pecans in a food processor. Add butter. Press the mixture into a pie plate and set aside. Open the can of coconut milk and pour into a clear jar or glass container. Let sit and settle (about 1/2 hour). The coconut cream will rise to the top and can easily be skimmed off. The thinner liquid can be substituted using a 1:1 ratio for evaporated milk, which is how it is used in this recipe. Reserve the thick cream to use as a substitute for whipped cream.

Mix sucanat, cinnamon, salt, ginger and cloves in small bowl. Beat eggs in large bowl. Stir in pumpkin and sugar-spice mixture. Gradually stir in coconut milk.

POUR into pie plate. BAKE in preheated 425° F oven for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to

350° F; bake for 40 to 50 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack for 2 hours. Serve immediately or refrigerate. Top with whipped coconut cream before serving.

Whipped Coconut cream

- Coconut fat from can of coconut milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Place the cream in the bowl of a stand mixer, or a large bowl. Turn your mixer or hand beaters to high speed, and whip the coconut cream for 3 to 5 minutes. Whip until it becomes fluffy and light, with soft peaks. Mix in vanilla. You'll be surprised at how over-the-top yummy this is!