

Talking Turkey

Written by Written by Melissa Larsen and Christine Whitton/Photographed by Jackie Mercandetti

On Nov. 25, the bird is the word. This Thanksgiving Day, follow expert cooking tips from the Valley's culinary masterminds and try out a from-scratch stuffing recipe to dazzle your guests during the holiday feast.



RECIPE

Wild Mushroom Bread Stuffing

Just like every Goose needs his Maverick, every turkey needs its stuffing. To break from tradition (or that tired boxed version) this Thanksgiving, try this mushroom-centric side from Roaring Fork's Executive Chef Bryan Hulihee.

- 1 Loaf of focaccia bread
- 1 C Shitake mushrooms
- 1 C Oyster mushrooms
- 1 C Portobello mushrooms
- 1 Stick of unsalted butter
- 3 White onions
- 4 Large ribs of celery
- 5 Garlic cloves
- 4 Large eggs, lightly beaten
- ¾ C Heavy cream
- ½ C Turkey giblet stock
- 1 C Parmigiano Reggiano, grated
- ½ C Parsley, chopped

Preheat oven to 350 degrees with rack in the middle. Generously butter baking dish. Put bread in two shallow baking pans and bake, switching position of pans halfway through baking, until just dried out (about 10 minutes). Heat one tablespoon of oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat until it simmers, then cook half of the mushrooms, stirring and breaking them into pieces until golden brown (about three minutes). Transfer with a slotted spoon to a large bowl, and brown remaining mushrooms in remaining tablespoon of oil. Transfer to a bowl. Pour off fat from skillet and wipe clean. Heat butter over medium heat until foam subsides, then cook onions, celery, garlic and a half teaspoon each of salt and pepper, stirring occasionally until golden brown. Add vegetables and bread to mushrooms. Whisk together eggs, half cup of cream, turkey stock, cheese and parsley, then stir into stuffing and cool completely (about 30 minutes). Reserve five cups of stuffing to stuff turkey and spoon remainder into a baking dish. Then, drizzle with remaining one-fourth cup of cream. Cover stuffing and chill.

CHEF CHAT

What is your No. 1 rule when it comes to the Thanksgiving turkey?

"Everyone traditionally throws the whole turkey in the oven, but boning out the turkey makes all the difference. When you bone it out into different parts, it's so much more effective. From there, rolling it in fresh sage (and, if you prefer, bacon) gives it good flavor. Wrap that in aluminum foil, roast at 375 degrees for 50 minutes and you have a tasty turkey. Also, if you can, roast all the bones and parts for a delicious stock which makes a perfect turkey gravy." —*Chef Michael DeMaria of Heirloom*

"My No. 1 tip to a perfect Thanksgiving turkey is basting every half hour for a nice, brown, crisp skin. With many turkeys, I've found the breast can be slightly dry. This basting technique is key to a nice, moist breast. Also, I've found rotating every hour is perfect for even cooking." —*Chef Matt Carvalho of RnR*

"The No. 1 tip I recommend in cooking a turkey is to brine it. Brining adds moisture and flavor and helps to keep it from drying out. A turkey can be a serious investment in time so you want to make sure it is perfect, especially if you're entertaining." —*Chef Bryan Hulihee of Roaring Fork*

"Low and slow, that is the tempo." —*Chef Beau MacMillan of elements at Sanctuary Camelback Mountain Resort & Spa*

"My No. 1 tip for turkey is to brine it. Too many people don't plan ahead and take the time for this really simple step. Add one cup of light brown sugar and one cup of kosher salt to 1.5 gallons of warm H₂O and cover the bird overnight." —*Chef Aaron May of Iruña and Mabel's on Main*

"The only must-do when it comes to the annual festive bird cook-a-thon is to add fat and flavor in between the breast and the skin. This is best done by first putting on gloves, then placing your fingers under the skin near the bottom of the breasts. You can then slowly spread your fingers and move them back and forth while pushing forward until all the skin is loose over the breast. I like to chop up room-temperature butter, fresh herbs, salt, pepper and garlic to spread onto the breast. This will help with the flavor and to keep the breast from getting too dry. Experiment earlier in the year with the flavor combinations on a roast chicken." —*Chef Justin Beckett of Beckett's Table*

"Don't overcook it. When it's about two-thirds cooked, I cut between the breast and legs and spread them open so the thighs get done faster and the breast doesn't overcook and become dry." —*Chef Christopher Gross of Christopher's Restaurant and Crush Lounge*

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"My No. 1 tip for turkey is to brine it before cooking; second would be to sous-vide it." —*Chef Kevin Binkley of Binkley's*

"Put seasoned poultry butter underneath the skin of the turkey." —*Chef Eddie Matney of Eddie's House*

"Buy a fresh turkey in the 14- to 15-pound range. Large turkeys take longer to cook so there is more chance for the meat to dry out. If feeding a large crowd, buy two turkeys; they will be easier to cook and handle than one large turkey. You can also have one turkey on display while you slice the first one. Brining the turkey is a great way to seal in the flavors and keep the meat moist. Do not cook with the stuffing inside; it will take longer to cook to make sure the stuffing is done and, therefore, more chance for the meat to become dry. Instead, put fresh apples, sweet vermouth and herbs like sage and basil in the cavity to flavor the turkey." —*Chef Vincent Guerithault of Vincent on Camelback*

"I would strongly recommend trying to brine your turkey before it's time to cook it." —*Chef Greg LaPrad of Quiessence*

TO THE RESCUE

Overwhelmed with this year's task of being the holiday host? Don't panic. The fine folks at well-known national wholesalers can help with any dinner or dessert dilemma over the phone. From baking and cooking to decorating and storing, these trained talkers will ease any frazzled chef.

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888.275.2388, www.bettycrocker.com.

Butterball Turkey Talk-Line

800.288.8372, www.butterball.com.

Foster Farms Turkey Help Line

800.255.7227, www.fosterfarms.com.

Land O' Lakes Holiday Leaflet Merry and Bright Recipe Line

800.837.7702, www.landolakes.com.

Nestlé Toll House Baking Information Line

800.851.0512, www.nestleusa.com.

Shady Brook Farms Turkey Line

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