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Roasted Turkey with Apple Cider Thyme Gravy

Yield: Serves twelve; yields 5 cups gravy

I think a fresh organic turkey tastes best and I like to roast two smaller birds rather than one large one more of everything etc... You can make this gravy while the turkey is roasting.

For the Gravy:

- 2/3 cup flour, sifted
- 1/4 pound (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter
- 3 cups apple cider
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 apple, peeled, cored, and diced
- 2 shallots, chopped (about 4 tablespoons)
- 1 1/2 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock; more as needed
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme

For the Turkey:

- Oil for spraying brown grocery bag (I use a pastry brush for this)
- 12- to 14-pound fresh turkey (preferably organic), with neck
- Reserved herb butter from Buttercup Squash & Leek Soup (see recipe below)
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 recipe Wild Rice Stuffing (see recipe below)
- Kitchen twine for trussing
- 5 tablespoons butter, cut into 10 pieces
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 2 teaspoons salt

1 tablespoon fresh thyme
3 cups homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
Fresh herbs for garnish

Other necessary recipes: Wild Rice, Spiced Pecan, Apple & Sourdough Bread Stuffing, and Buttercup Squash & Leek Soup with Herb Butter both follow.

DIRECTIONS:

UP TO ONE WEEK AHEAD: In a medium heavy sauté pan over low heat, melt the butter; add the flour, whisking until smooth. Cook over very low heat for 20 min., stirring frequently. The roux should be a pale straw brown; if it begins to darken, remove it from the heat. Refrigerate the roux in a wide-mouthed jar or other covered container.

OK ON THE DAY OF SERVING: To prepare and stuff the turkey, bring the roux to room temperature. Heat the oven to 325 degrees F and adjust the racks to accommodate the roasting pan and an extra pan of stuffing. Cut away one of the wider sides of a NEW (I usually grab a few new ones before I leave the store on shopping day) brown grocery bag and coat the underside of the remainder with oil, using a spray bottle or pastry brush.

Rinse the bird with cold water inside and out and blot dry with paper towels..
Save the neck and the other innards.

Cut off the pope's nose (the tail) from the turkey and tuck the wing tips under the back of the bird. With a rubber spatula or your hands, separate the skin from the breast and spread the herb butter and garlic slices under the skin. Loosely fill the front and back cavities of the bird with stuffing.

NOTE: Insert a long metal (Stainless steel) fork in the middle of the stuffing in the back cavity, this will help the stuffing cook faster by drawing the heat to the interior of the stuffing.

Cut a slit in the flaps on either side of the cavity. Tie a 16-inch piece of twine around one leg, feed the twine through both slits in the flaps, and pull the twine taut. Wrap the twine around the other leg once, and tie the legs together securely.

Put the extra stuffing in a buttered baking dish, about 9x7 inches. Dot with the 10 dabs of butter and cover with foil. Poke 8 holes in the foil for steam and set aside in the refrigerator.

Coat the bottom of a large roasting pan with 1/4 cup olive oil. Set the bird in the pan and rub it with the other 1/4 cup oil; sprinkle with 2 tsp. salt and 1 Tbs. thyme. Put the neck in the pan. Cover the bird loosely with the brown bag and put the pan in the oven.

After 1 hour of roasting: Remove the neck from the oven; set aside. Begin making a stock reduction for the gravy: In a 2-qt. pot, combine 3 cups cider, the wine, apple, shallots, 1 1/2 cups stock, and turkey neck plus other innards. Boil over high heat until the liquid is reduced by half (about 2 1/2 cups), about 30 min. Discard the turkey neck and innards. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside. Remove the pan of stuffing from the refrigerator to let it come to room temperature for 30 min.

Then after 2 1/2 hours of roasting: Put the pan of stuffing in the oven. At the same time, baste the turkey with any juices (there may not be a lot from an organic turkey) and add the 3 cups chicken stock to the pan. Continue roasting for another hour.

After 3 1/2 hours of roasting: Remove the paper bag from the turkey. Take the turkey from the oven, set it on a hot pad on the counter, and tilt the pan to pour or ladle off all the juices into a heatproof container (when you tilt the pan, use a towel to hold a leg of the turkey to keep it from sliding). Check the turkey's temperature (the thickest part of the thigh should be 165 degrees F when done, and the center of the stuffing should be above 160 degrees F.)

Return the turkey to the oven to finish roasting if needed. Remove the foil cover from the pan of stuffing. Let the pan juices sit for at least 10 min. to allow the fat to rise.

Finish the gravy. Skim the fat off the reserved pan juices and add the juices to the reduced cider stock. Bring the liquid to a simmer (skimming off any more fat if necessary) and slowly whisk in about one-third of the roux until it's absorbed and the gravy thickens. Add more roux if you like a thicker gravy or more stock or apple cider if you want it thinner.

Strain the gravy (the apple will have disintegrated), and season with 2 teaspoons salt and 1 teaspoon pepper or to taste. Add the thyme and keep the gravy warm (put the pot, loosely covered with foil, on a hot plate if you have one).

After 4 hours of roasting: Check the turkey temperature again. Remove the pan of stuffing (it should feel firm). If the turkey is not done yet, check in another 30 minutes. When the turkey reaches temperature, remove it from oven and cover loosely with a tent of foil. Let rest at least 20 min. so the juices settle back into the flesh, which will keep it tender.

Or,... Leave the turkey in the oven, turn off the heat, and leave the oven door cracked. (I use an oven mitt for this) and you can hold the turkey this way for an hour.

TO SERVE: Transfer the turkey to a cutting board and slice. I like to remove the legs and the breast and slice the breast meat on a bias and the thigh meat into slices.
Arrange on a platter and garnish with fresh herbs.

Wild Rice, Spiced Pecan, Apple & Sourdough Bread Stuffing

Yield: Yields 14 cups (Serves 28)

This recipe makes enough stuffing to fill the bird and to fill an extra baking dish.

INGREDIENTS:

1 pound loaf sourdough or peasant-style bread **NOTE:** I love the artisan breads from Costco

2 cups raw wild rice

2 teaspoons plus 1 Tbs salt

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 medium onions, cut into small dice (1 1/2 cups)

4 large ribs celery, cut into small dice (1 1/2 cups)

2 small cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage

1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme

1 1/2 teaspoons white pepper

3 Granny Smith apples

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon sugar
1 2/3 cups apple cider
4 large eggs
3/4 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken stock
1/2 recipe Spiced Pecans (see recipe), coarsely chopped

DIRECTIONS:

TWO DAYS AHEAD:

Trim the crust from the bread and cut the remainder into 1/2-inch dice to get 6 cups. Spread the bread on baking sheets to dry overnight.

ONE DAY AHEAD: In a large pot, combine the wild rice, 6 cups water, and 2 tsp. salt. Bring to a boil, reduce to a low simmer, cover, and cook until tender and the kernels start to open, 50 to 55 min. Remove from the heat, drain if necessary, and spread out to cool on a baking sheet.

In a large sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions, sauté for About 4 minutes add the celery and garlic and sauté until the onions are translucent, about Another 4 min. Remove from the heat and stir in the herbs, pepper, and 1-tablespoon salt. Cool in a shallow dish.

Meanwhile, peel, core, and dice the apples. Return the pan to the heat and add the remaining 1 tablespoon oil and 2 tablespoons butter. When the butter sizzles, add the apples and sprinkle in the sugar. Sauté until the apples begin to brown, 5 to 8 min. Add 2/3 cup of the cider (reserve the rest), scrape up any brown bits, and let the cider reduce for 1 min. Pour the apples and liquid into the onion mixture and let cool completely. In a large bowl, combine the rice, bread, and apple mixture. Refrigerate.

ON THE DAY OF SERVING: Bring the stuffing to room temperature. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Mix together the eggs, 1 cup cider, and chicken stock. Fold the liquid into the stuffing mixture and mix well. **NOTE:** It will be fairly wet. Fold in the spiced pecans. Follow the directions for stuffing the Turkey above and baking the extra stuffing in a pan.

Next Butterscup Soup...



Butternut Squash & Leek Soup with Herb Butter

Butternut squash has a lovely earthy flavor with a taste similar to sweet potatoes. *Butternut* squash, with a subtle sweet flavor and bright orange flesh, is also delicious and may be used instead.

INGREDIENTS

For the Herb Butter:

- 1 shallot, finely chopped (about 2 tablespoons)
- 1/2 cup dry sherry
- 16 tablespoons (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon white pepper

For the Soup:

- 4 cups chopped, well-washed leeks, white part only (about 3 large)
- 8 cups 1-inch cubes seeded peeled butternut squash (about 3 medium)
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 6 cups canned low-salt chicken broth
- 2 1/2 tablespoons salt
- 1 teaspoon white pepper; more to taste
- Chopped fresh chives for garnish

MAKE THE HERB BUTTER: Heat a small nonstick sauté pan over medium heat. When hot, add the shallots and heat to release their aroma and lightly toast them, about 30 seconds. Remove from the heat and add the sherry. Set the pan back on the heat and reduce the liquid to 2 Tbs., about 8 min. Let cool. In a small mixing bowl, blend the butter, chives, sherry-shallot mixture, salt, and pepper. Line a baking sheet with parchment or waxed paper and spread the butter 1/4 inch thick to cover about 8x6 inches. Cover and chill. With a small cookie cutter (I use a star) or a knife, cut out 12 small shapes. Wrap in plastic and freeze. NOTE: you can freeze any remaining butter separately for another use.

DO-AHEAD TIP: Butter can be made up to 2 weeks ahead.

To MAKE THE SOUP: Put the leeks in a heavy-based nonaluminum, 8-qt. stockpot. (NOTE: I LOVE Rachel Rays Oval shaped cast iron pots GREAT price, SMART shape, FUN colors) Put the squash over the leeks; add the wine and stock. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer; cook until the squash is fork-tender, about 25 min. Let cool 15 min. Add the salt and pepper; purée in a blender (or food processor). **DO-AHEAD TIP:** Cover soup and refrigerate up to 3 days ahead, or freeze up to 1 week ahead.

TO SERVE: Defrost the butter shapes. Reheat the soup over low to medium heat, stirring frequently (or in a microwave). Ladle the hot soup into shallow bowls and garnish with herb butter and fresh chives.

Additional Support Recipes:

My Simply GREAT GRAVY:

3 tablespoon Unsalted Butter
3 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup flour
Juices from a roasted turkey (about 2 cups)
Pepper to taste
1 teaspoon fresh rubbed finely chopped sage
Splash of white wine

DIRECTIONS: In a large pan, heat butter and add garlic. Cook until garlic is soft. (do not burn) Add flour and mix well. Cook for about a minute or until the flour smells nutty. **NOTE:** I like to actually toast the gravy a bit in another pan. Add turkey drippings, bring to slow boil and cook until thickened (about 3 to 4 minutes). Season with pepper, sage and wine. Pour into a gravy boat and enjoy



Lo-fat Cider Gravy

NOTE: Make this low-fat gravy in the roasting pan while the turkey rests. Apple cider adds rich fall flavor.

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups Turkey Giblet Stock (see recipe link above)
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 1/4 cups apple cider
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1/4 teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper to taste

When you remove the turkey from the roasting pan, leave the roasted shallots behind. Skim off any visible fat from the pan juices.

Whisk 1/2 cup Turkey Giblet Stock (or chicken broth) and flour in a small bowl until smooth; set aside. Set the roasting pan over two burners on medium-high heat. Add cider and vinegar; bring to a boil and cook, scraping up the browned bits from the pan, until the liquid is reduced by about half, 6 to 8 minutes.

Add the remaining 3 1/2 cups stock (or broth). Increase heat to high; return to a boil, whisking often. Boil until the liquid is reduced by about half, 8 to 12 minutes

Whisk the reserved flour mixture into the pan. Boil, whisking constantly, until the gravy is thickened, 1 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and pour the gravy through a fine sieve into a large measuring cup. (Discard the solids). Season with salt and pepper Yields: 2 ¼ cups.

Turkey Giblet STOCK:

This EASY turkey stock adds great flavor to the gravy, but you can still use chicken broth instead with good results.

Make Ahead Tip: Cover and refrigerate for up to 1 day or freeze.

Neck and giblets from a 10- to 12-pound turkey

6 cups water

1 medium onion, peeled and quartered

1 medium carrot, chopped

1 stalk celery, chopped

1 bay leaf

1 sprig fresh thyme

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

DIRECTIONS: Combine neck and giblets (except liver), water, onion, carrot and celery in a large saucepan; bring to a boil. Add bay leaf, thyme and peppercorns. Reduce heat and simmer, skimming and discarding any foam, for 1 hour. Strain stock through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium bowl and let cool. Discard solids



Traditional Roast Turkey with Riesling Gravy

NOTE: To avoid serving a greasy gravy with your turkey, strain the roasting juices into a fat separator. The fat rises into the spout allowing you to pour it off before making the gravy...OR try this: Simply place into the fridge or freezer to rush it up a bit and the **fat will turn to solids** and you can just spoon off YEA!

INGREDIENTS

One 18-pound turkey, wing tips, neck and giblets reserved
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
2 large onions, thinly sliced
2 large carrots, thinly sliced
2 large celery ribs, thinly sliced
4 garlic cloves, thickly sliced
2 large shallots, thickly sliced
12 large fresh sage leaves, plus additional sprigs for garnish
12 large fresh thyme sprigs, plus additional sprigs for garnish
2 bay leaves
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
Turkey stock and reserved turkey giblets
5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/2 cup semidry Riesling

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. .. Season the turkey cavity with salt and pepper and fill it with half of the onions, carrots, celery, garlic, and shallots along with the 12 sage leaves, 12 thyme sprigs, and the bay leaves. Tie the legs together with string, wrapping it around the tail to close the cavity. Rub the turkey all over with 2 tablespoons of the butter and season with salt and pepper. Spread the remaining vegetables in a large roasting pan and set the turkey on top. Add 1 cup of the Turkey Stock to the pan. Roast the bird for 1 1/2 hours, basting generously and adding 1 more cup of stock to the pan after 1 hour.

Add another 1/2 cup of stock to the pan and cover the turkey breast loosely with foil. Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees. Roast the turkey for 1-1/2 hours longer, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the inner thigh reaches 165 degrees; baste often and add another 1/2 cup of stock to the pan after 1 hour. If the turkey is not nicely browned, remove the foil for the last 30 minutes of cooking.

Turn the oven off and leave the turkey in for about 1 hour, or until the temperature of the inner thigh reaches 180 degrees. Transfer the bird to a large platter, cover loosely with foil and let rest for up to 1 hour.

Meanwhile, strain the roasting juices into a medium saucepan; reserve the vegetables. Add the remaining 3 cups stock to the pan and bring to a simmer, skimming as necessary. In a large nonreactive saucepan, melt the remaining 3 tablespoons butter.

Add the reserved vegetables and stir in the flour. Cook the mixture over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until very thick and brown, about 5 minutes. Stir in the wine and cook, stirring frequently, until very thick again. Gradually whisk the hot stock and roasting juices into the gravy base and simmer over low heat for 10 minutes, stirring often. Strain the gravy into a medium saucepan and simmer gently over low heat for about 15 minutes, skimming occasionally; you should have about 4 cups.

Add stock if the gravy is too thick. Finely chop the reserved giblets that were cooked in the stock and stir them into the gravy; simmer for 5 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper and keep warm. Discard the string and the vegetables from the turkey. Garnish the bird with the sage and thyme sprigs. Carve the turkey at the table and pass the gravy alongside