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Ina Garten's Make-Ahead Roast Turkey and Gravy With Onions and Sage

By [Ina Garten](#)**Time** 5 hours, plus 2 to 3 days' brining**Rating** 4 ★★★★★ (44)**Notes** [Read 7 community notes](#) ↓[Save Recipe](#)

Johnny Miller for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Christine Albano.

One of the most stressful things about Thanksgiving is the turkey: timing it, carving it, keeping it hot. As I mentioned in my book “Make It Ahead” (Clarkson Potter, 2014), I discovered that I could roast the turkey early in the day, carve it and arrange it on a layer of gravy on an oven-to-table platter. It changed my Thanksgiving game plan. I prepare the platter, set it aside at room temperature, then reheat it all before dinner. Delicious turkey without the stress!

Featured in: [Ina Garten's Store-Bought Thanksgiving](#)

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INGREDIENTS**Yield:** 8 servings**For the Turkey**1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme
-----**PREPARATION****Step 1**

Brine the turkey: 2 or 3 days before you plan to roast the turkey, combine the thyme, lemon zest and 3 tablespoons salt. Wash the turkey inside and out, drain it well and pat it all over

leaves

Grated zest of 1 lemon

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 (12- to 14-pound) fresh turkey

1 large yellow onion, unpeeled and cut in eighths

1 lemon, quartered

8 sprigs fresh thyme

4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{2}$ stick) unsalted butter, melted

For the Gravy

6 tablespoons ($\frac{3}{4}$ stick) unsalted butter

1 large red onion, halved and sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thick

4 large garlic cloves, peeled and halved

6 tablespoons all-purpose flour

4 cups good chicken stock

2 tablespoons Cognac or brandy

10 large fresh sage leaves

2 bay leaves

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 cup dry white wine, such as Pinot Grigio

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Wash the turkey inside and out, drain it well and pat it all over with paper towels. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the salt mixture in the cavity of the turkey and rub the rest on the skin, including under the wings and legs. Place the turkey in a shallow dish just large enough to hold it and wrap it tightly with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 1 or 2 days. The day before you plan to roast the turkey, remove the plastic wrap and leave the turkey in the fridge. The skin will dry out and turn a little translucent.

Step 2

Prepare the turkey: Heat the oven to 325 degrees. Put the turkey in a large roasting pan, discarding any juices in the dish. Place the onion, lemon and thyme sprigs in the cavity. With kitchen string, tie the legs together and the wings close to the body. Brush the turkey with the butter and sprinkle it generously with salt and pepper.

Step 3

Roast the turkey for 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ hours, until the breast meat registers 165 degrees on an instant-read thermometer (put the thermometer in sideways). Remove from the oven and place the turkey on a platter. Cut off the legs and thighs and put them back into the roasting pan, covering the breast and carcass tightly with aluminum foil. Place the roasting pan back in the oven for 15 to 20 minutes, until the dark meat registers 180 degrees. Remove the dark meat to the platter with the turkey, cover it tightly with aluminum foil, and allow it to rest at room temperature for 15 minutes.

Step 4

While the turkey is roasting, make the gravy base: Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté, stirring often, for 15 to 20 minutes, until the onion becomes browned and starts to caramelize. Sprinkle on the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Stir in the chicken stock, Cognac, sage leaves, bay leaves, 2 teaspoons salt (or more or less, depending on the saltiness of the chicken stock) and 1 teaspoon pepper. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and simmer for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Set aside at room temperature for 1 hour, then strain, pressing the solids lightly and then discarding them. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Step 5

While the turkey rests, finish the gravy: Place the roasting pan

on the stovetop over medium heat and add the wine. Bring to a boil, lower the heat and simmer for 2 minutes, stirring and scraping up all the bits clinging to the bottom of the pan. Slowly whisk the gravy base into the pan. Simmer for about 5 minutes, until the gravy is smooth and slightly thickened. Taste for seasoning.

Step 6

Pour a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch layer of the gravy into a large (12- by 16-inch), ovenproof serving platter (make sure it's ovenproof!). Carve the turkey and arrange it artfully on top of the gravy. Cover the platter and set it aside for up to 2 hours, until ready to serve. Uncover the platter and place it in the 325 degree oven for 15 to 30 minutes, until the turkey is very hot. Serve hot with extra hot gravy on the side.

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M Ahern

3 hours ago

Leaving the turkey out at room temperature for hours goes against all food safety recommendations. NEVER do this.

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Credits

Adapted from "Make It Ahead" by Ina Garten (Clarkson Potter, 2014)

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