

# ADRIAN'S SMOKED TURKEY

PREP TIME: 24 HRS | COOKING TIME: 6-8 HRS | SERVES: 12+

Since 2007, my wife Lily and I have hosted Thanksgiving for our family and friends. One of our favorite traditions is a turkey cook-off: I smoke one on the Weber while she roasts hers in the oven. And although I like to think my turkey wins every year (wink, wink), the smoked version is always a crowd-pleaser! I recommend our [2021 Joseph Jewell Phelps Vineyard Pinot Noir](#) for a perfect pairing!



## INGREDIENTS

- 7 quarts (28 cups) water
- 1 1/2 cups coarse salt
- 6 bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons whole coriander seeds
- 1 tablespoon dried juniper berries
- 2 tablespoons whole black peppercorns
- 1 tablespoon fennel seeds
- 1 teaspoon black or brown mustard seeds
- 1 fresh whole turkey (15-16 pounds), patted dry, neck and giblets reserved for stock, liver reserved for stuffing
- 1 bottle dry riesling
- 2 medium onions, thinly sliced
- 6 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 bunch fresh thyme

## TOOLS

- 5-gallon container (like a large stockpot or bucket)
- Large brining or roasting bag
- Refrigerator or a cooler with ice

## PREPARATION

- Pick a fresh turkey around 15-16 pounds for the best flavor and cooking results. I recommend Organic Willie Birds from Sonoma County.
- Gather plenty of coals and wood before starting so you don't run out mid-smoke. For the wood, apple, cherry, or hickory chips give a subtle, smoky flavor that complements turkey without overpowering it.
- I typically use a Weber coal grill, but if you have a smoker or gas grill with a wood chip tray, that can make the smoking process simpler.

## BRINING AND SEASONING THE TURKEY

- **Make the Brine:** The day before smoking, bring 1 quart of water to a simmer with the salt, bay leaves, and spices. Stir until the salt dissolves, then let it cool for about 5 minutes.
- **Submerge the Turkey:** Place a large brining or roasting bag inside your container to reduce cleanup. Add the turkey, then pour in the salt mixture, the rest of the water, and other ingredients. Tie the bag tightly, ensuring the turkey is fully submerged (a plate on top can help if needed). Refrigerate for 24 hours, flipping once midway. If fridge space is limited, place it in a cooler with ice, replenishing ice as necessary to maintain a temperature of around 40°F.
- **Remove and Dry the Turkey:** About an hour before smoking, take the turkey out of the brine and pat it dry inside and out.

## SMOKING THE TURKEY

- **Preheat the Smoker:** Aim to keep your grill or smoker at a consistent 225°F. For gas grills, set half the burners to medium-low, keeping the other half off. For charcoal, heat coals until they're just ashed over, place them on one side of the grill, and adjust vents to about 25% open.
- **Position the Turkey:** Place the turkey breast-side up over the indirect heat area (no roasting pan needed). If your grill has hotter areas, rotate the bird occasionally for even cooking.
- **Smoking Process:** Close the lid and smoke the turkey for about 30 minutes per pound. Check that the internal temperature reaches 165°F to ensure doneness.
- **Rest the Turkey:** Let the turkey rest for 15 minutes before slicing. If it's ready early, tent it with foil and wrap it with towels to hold the heat. To re-crisp the skin, briefly broil in the oven if needed.

## SMOKING DURATION AND TEMPERATURE TIPS

Cooking time may vary, but 25-30 minutes per pound is a general guideline, especially without stuffing. Use a thermometer for accuracy. I aim for 225-275°F on my charcoal grill, though a gas grill or smoker is easier to maintain at a steady 225°F. Lower temperatures let wood chips smolder effectively, while higher temperatures can cause cleaner burns with less smoke.