



## Mad Max Turkey on The Egg

Ok, here's how I do it, but first a couple of disclaimers. One, I don't brine my turkey. As I've stated before, there is no particularly good reason for this other than I'm too lazy to do it, or I don't think about it in advance. Plus, I'm not sure I could find the refrigerator space for the container it would take. However, this should have no impact on if you want to brine and still follow the rest of my method/recipe. Second, while this method will usually result in fairly crisp skin, it is not my focus. Because of the herb treatment, the skin isn't necessarily that tasty anyway (pretty strong on the herbs), however, it will look great as far as the final presentation. My goal is a turkey where the breast is done at the same time as the legs (more on that later), the meat has a great flavor, and there are drippings that will make for the best gravy you ever ate (after all, how many times have you had good turkey but crummy or pedestrian gravy?). And, when the gravy is really good, you will make a really memorable impression on your guests. This is a very traditional turkey that benefits from the magic of the egg. All of this in my most humble of opinions of course.

*(Click on the thumbnail images below to view full-sized photos.)*

### Things You Will Need

- A turkey would be a good start
- Two onions
- Celery (and perhaps a carrot or two)
- Fresh herbs like tarragon, sage, thyme, rosemary and whatever else sounds good to you
- Two apples
- A lemon
- A pound (4 sticks) of butter: 2 for the turkey; 2 for the gravy
- Gallon zip-lock bags (very important!!!)
- Bottle of white wine (this is for the bird--buy more if you and yours will also be partaking)
- Flour
- Roasting pan
- Stock pot (at least 4 quarts)

### The Bird

I typically start with a fresh killed bird from the grocery, not necessarily organic or free range, but one, which hasn't been frozen like a rock for a year. Here's everything you need.

First, remember when you cleaned out the turkey and took out the neck, heart, giblets, liver, heart, and that lump of fat? Put these into a large pot.

Add a halved onion, couple of stalks of celery, a carrot or two, fresh herbs (in this case tarragon, sage, thyme -- rosemary is also good.)

Now fill the pot to the top with water and let it simmer all day. This will be your stock for making the gravy. Let this simmer all day long, adding water occasionally to keep the level up. This will do two things: 1) make your house smell great all day long and 2) create a wonderful rich stock for the gravy (which will be described later).

Back to the bird. Pat it dry, salt and pepper the cavity fairly liberally. Into the cavity stick one small onion (halved), one apple (quartered), one lemon (quartered) and a big bouquet of herbs (rosemary, sage, thyme, and whatever else you like. If you are a garlic person, it's a good place to stick some of that as well). Take two sticks of butter, softened. Chop up more fresh herbs and mix it into the butter till you have a nice paste. Put the bird in a roasting pan, breast up, elevated either on a v-rack or in my case I have a trivet like metal piece that raises the bird about 1 inch above the pan. Quarter another apple and throw it directly in the roasting pan around the bird.

Greenville County	Spartanburg County
108 Batesville Rd.	8705 Asheville Highway
Simpsonville, SC 29681	Spartanburg, SC 29316
864-458-9699	864-578-7080

## Two Very Important Steps

One. 20 minutes before you put it in the egg (or oven), take a one gallon zip lock bag full of ice cubes and lay it over the breasts for the 20 minutes. What this does is lower the breast temps sufficiently that over the course of the roasting, the breast and thighs will be done at the same time. Over the years (and I've been doing the thanksgiving turkey now for over 23 years), I've tried every trick in the book (paper bags, breast side down, terry cloth towels over the breast, etc.) and the ice bag absolutely works. I've been doing this now for about 10 years, and I've consistently had perfectly done, moist breasts finished right along with well cooked thighs. If you don't do anything else, try this. Remove the bag of ice just before putting it in the egg.

Two. Last steps prior to putting the bird in the egg (or oven), take your butter paste and liberally apply it all over the bird. You can work some under the skin if you want to, but it's not necessary. Then, open a bottle of white wine (most any good white will do), and pour half the bottle all over the bird and in the cavity. DON'T drink the rest of the bottle; you will need it for the gravy.

## The Egg Set Up

Sometime before Thanksgiving, test out your setup. Last year I found that my roasting pan would not work out with grid on top of inverted plate setter, it was just too high into the dome. I ended up borrowing a rig from Nature Boy that consisted of two metal bars and a pie plate that fit under the grid in its normal place on the fire ring. I kept the pie plate filled with water all day so as to create a good indirect heat barrier from my roasting pan, thereby avoiding any scorching of my drippings (this is key to having the good drippings for gravy). This year I did a set up of inverted plate setter with the little green BGE 'feet' on top, and the roasting pan on top of the feet. Key here is to have a heat barrier and sufficient airflow under your roasting pan to avoid any scorching in the pan.

I have an 80-year-old aluminum oval turkey-roasting pan that fits perfectly in a large egg. This time of year, the grocery stores sell all kinds and sizes of metal pans. Figure out what you need to fit in the egg.

## The Fire

I set up as full a load of lump as I could (almost to the top of the fire ring, there was maybe a 1 inch gap between the lump and the bottom of my plate setter). I added one good chunk of apple wood. I didn't want a 'smoked' turkey. When it was done, the turkey had a nice hint of smoke. Its your call as to how smokey you want yours to taste but remember, a turkey will absorb a lot of smoke, so take it easy. I got a good established fire going at 325 degrees. I let it burn for about 45 minutes prior to putting the turkey in. I found that a full load of lump at 325 degrees lasts only about 8 hours, so for a 20+ pound bird, it gets a little close.

## The Cook

My turkey weighed in at around 21 pounds. At 325 degrees it took a good 6 ½ - 7 hours to be done. During the cook I regularly basted it with a bulb baster (about once every 20 minutes after the first hour). If using a water pan for a heat barrier, I also regularly check the water pan underneath the roasting pan to insure it stayed full of water. When the skin started browning, I tented it loosely with aluminum foil until about the last hour, when I removed the foil to let the skin crisp up and come up to the color I wanted (a nice deep golden brown). I didn't check temps until the last hour or two. The goal is to have internal temps of 160 in the breast and 180 in the thigh (this is where the ice bag did its work). Even then, I pulled the turkey out when two things happened. First, when a deep poke in the thigh and breast resulted in clear juices running, and second, when the drumstick rotated freely at the joint (hey, this is how my mom and Aunt Elsie taught me to do it).



After 1 hour



After 3 hours



After 4 hours



After 5 hours  
(We're getting close)



After 7 hours  
Ready To Carve!

Greenville County	Spartanburg County
108 Batesville Rd.	8705 Asheville Highway
Simpsonville, SC 29681	Spartanburg, SC 29316
864-458-9699	864-578-7080

## Very Important

When you pull the roasting pan and turkey from the egg and you're removing the turkey from the roasting pan, first tilt the bird up so that all the juices in the cavity pour out into the pan (you do NOT want to lose this). Put your bird aside on a cutting board or platter and cover in foil until ready to carve.

## The Gravy

So, how do you make great gravy? It's really pretty easy, particularly at this point because you have created all the wonderful ingredients that you really need to do it.

As stated before, when your turkey is done roasting, and prior to moving it to a platter, tip up the bird so that all the juices will run out of the cavity back into the roasting pan.

Here is what your pan will look like, with all the drippings in it. Also, discard the apple that was in the pan all through the roasting. Note that dark stuff you see is not burnt. It is well browned and will affect the final color of your gravy, but trust me; this is where the entire real flavor is. Note: how dark the drippings end up being will determine how dark your gravy turns out. Sometimes it is lighter, sometimes darker. It will be fantastic either way.

Now pour the contents of this pan into a bowl or large measuring cup. In this case, I've gotten about 2 full cups of liquid from the pan. Let it sit for about 5 minutes so that the fat separates from the good drippings.

In this picture you can see that almost half of my pan drippings were fat. Using a ladle, gently remove the fat and leave just the dark pan juices.

Here is your bowl of crud/drippings to be used in the gravy. It's beautiful, dark and rich in flavor. This is the true key to your gravy.

Now you are really ready to make the gravy. Take your pan and place it over a burner (in this case over both front and back burners) on high heat.

Add two sticks of butter and whisk it hard, pulling up as much of the pan crud as possible. All through this process you need to be constantly whisking in order to avoid any burning or scorching.

As the butter melts and you dislodge the crud from the pan, it will be bubbly and brown.

Now start adding flour (anywhere from ½ to 1 cup). Keep whisking and working it in until it is bubbly, pasty texture.

Keep whisking that flour/butter/crud mixture until you have a nice smooth roux. There should be no lumps of flour.

After about 4 to 5 minutes it should be thick and smooth.

Now, remember that ½ a bottle of wine you were saving (you did save it didn't you)? Add the wine to the roux in the roasting pan. You should still have it on a high flame, so the alcohol will boil off quickly. Keep whisking (the key to a nice smooth lump free gravy is to whisk the roux till its lump free and then keep whisking the other ingredients in so that it stays nice and smooth. Because of the high heat, it will be constantly bubbling, this is why you have to keep whisking, so it doesn't scorch or burn).

Next step, remember that bowl of crud/liquid you saved from the pan and separated from its fat? Once the wine has been mixed in, and reduced about 1/4 to 1/3, add in this liquid. This is the true key to the gravy, it imparts so much great flavor. One year, I had the bowl of crud in my sink, and while I was doing other stuff, some do-gooder (my sister in law I think, although no one ever fessed up) threw it down the sink thinking they had done me a favor. I almost killed somebody.

Now that you've mixed in the crud, remember that stock you've been cooking all day? Start ladling that into the pan, one ladle at a time, continuing to whisk it in. Keep the heat on, bring it all to a boil. Keep adding stock till you have the desired thickness where you want it.

Greenville County	Spartanburg County
108 Batesville Rd.	8705 Asheville Highway
Simpsonville, SC 29681	Spartanburg, SC 29316
864-458-9699	864-578-7080

This is a picture of the gravy after addition of the crud and beginning to add the stock. Its still pretty thick and I'll continue to add stock till it hits the consistency I want.

## The Big Finish

First, take the neck, giblets, heart and liver from the stockpot. Remove the meat from the neck (you'll be amazed how much meat there is).

Chop it all up (meat, giblets, heart and liver) very finely and add it to the gravy (its ok to feed a little of this to the dog(s), they love it).

Second, in a small bowl, mix some of the stock with some flour to create a thickening agent. By doing this in a separate bowl, you avoid the problem of adding flour directly to the gravy with the intention of thickening it but in reality, you'll be creating lumps. If the gravy is too thin for your tastes, you can stir in some of this thickening agent till you get the gravy you want. Too thick? Simply add some more stock.

Finish up your gravy by adding some salt and pepper to taste (or as my mom would suggest, some worsceshire sauce). Final note, this gravy will not look like the creamy stuff from a jar, nor is it intended to, but I'll bet it's the best you ever had.

## The End

So, here's the finished product; succulent, moist, juicy turkey with all the great flavor added by roasting in the Egg, and the best tasting gravy you ever had.

Bon appétit!

Mad Max

Greenville County	Spartanburg County
108 Batesville Rd.	8705 Asheville Highway
Simpsonville, SC 29681	Spartanburg, SC 29316
864-458-9699	864-578-7080