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## A Stuffed Christmas Turkey

*"We are just beginning to be engaged in another Christmas duty, & next to eating Turkeys, a very pleasant one, laying out Edward's money for the Poor."*

Jane Austen to Martha Lloyd

November, 1812



Turkey was, next to Roast Beef, one of the most commonly eaten meats at Christmas. Though many found the meat to be tough, dry or tasteless (due partly to the fact that the turkeys eaten in cities had set out on foot back in August, to arrive at market in time for Christmas), the Austen family was quite proud of their tender, plump, home grown turkeys and often sent them as gifts to family and friends.

Traditional recipes, like the following one, suggest stuffing the bird with forcemeat or Sausage Stuffing before roasting. Step by step instructions with photographs can be found [here](#) for creating a truly authentic dish like that described below, by Hannah Glasse. Cooks more comfortable in a modern kitchen will find the second recipe of more use. First, though, a few words from Isabella Beeton, author of *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*, 1861:

### Roast Turkey

*A noble dish is a turkey, roast or boiled. A Christmas dinner, with the middle classes of this empire, would scarcely be a Christmas dinner without its turkey; and we can hardly imagine an object of greater envy than is presented by a respected portly pater-familias carving, at the season devoted to good cheer and genial charity, his own fat turkey, and carving it well.*

*The only art consists, as in the carving of a goose, in getting from the breast as many fine slices as possible; and all must have remarked the*

*very great difference in the large number of people whom a good carver will find slices for, and the comparatively few that a bad carver will succeed in serving. As we have stated in both the carving of a duck and goose, the carver should commence cutting slices close to the wing from, 2 to 3, and then proceed upwards towards the ridge of the breastbone: this is not the usual plan, but, in practice, will be found the best.*

*The breast is the only part which is looked on as fine in a turkey, the legs being very seldom cut off and eaten at table: they are usually removed to the kitchen, where they are taken off, as here marked, to appear only in a form which seems to have a special attraction at a bachelor's supper-table, we mean devilled: served in this way, they are especially liked and relished.*

*A boiled turkey is carved in the same manner as when roasted.*

### Roast Turkey

*Choose cock turkeys by their short spurs and black legs, in which case they are young; if the spurs are long, and the legs pale and rough, they are old. If the bird has been long killed, the eyes will appear sunk and the feet very dry; but, if fresh, the contrary will be the case. Middling-sized fleshy turkeys are by many persons considered superior to those of an immense growth, as they are, generally speaking, much more tender.*

*They should never be dressed the same day they are killed; but, in cold weather, should hang at least 8 days; if the weather is mild, 4 or 5 days will be found sufficient. Carefully pluck the bird, singe it with white paper, and wipe it thoroughly with a cloth; draw it, preserve the liver and gizzard, and be particular not to break the gall-bag, as no washing will remove the bitter taste it imparts where it once touches.*

*Wash it inside well, and wipe it thoroughly dry with a cloth; the outside merely requires nicely wiping, as we have just stated. Cut off the neck close to the back, but leave enough of the crop-skin to turn over; break the leg-bone close below the knee, draw out the strings from the thighs, and flatten the breastbone to make it look plump.*

*Have ready a forcemeat made by recipe No. 417. Fill the breast with this, and, if a trussing-needle is used, sew the neck over to the back; if a needle is not at hand, a skewer will answer the purpose. Run a skewer through the pinion and thigh into the body to the pinion and thigh on the other side, and press the legs as much as possible between the breast and the side bones, and put the liver under one pinion and the gizzard under the other. Pass a string across the back of the bird, catch it over the points of the skewer, tie it in the centre of the back, and be particular that*

*the turkey is very firmly trussed. This may be more easily accomplished with a needle and twine than with skewers.*

### Mode

*Fasten a sheet of buttered paper on to the breast of the bird, put it down to a bright fire, at some little distance at first (afterwards draw it nearer), and keep it well basted the whole of the time it is cooking. About 1/4 hour before serving, remove the paper, dredge the turkey lightly with flour, and put a piece of butter into the basting-ladle; as the butter melts, baste the bird with it. When of a nice brown and well frothed, serve with a tureen of good brown gravy and one of bread sauce. Fried sausages are a favourite addition to roast turkey; they make a pretty garnish, besides adding very much to the flavour. When these are not at hand, a few forcemeat balls should be placed round the dish as a garnish. Turkey may also be stuffed with sausage-meat, and a chestnut forcemeat with the same sauce is, by many persons, much esteemed as an accompaniment to this favourite dish.*

*Time: Small turkey, 1–1/2 hour; moderate-sized one, about 10 lbs., 2 hours; large turkey, 2–1/2 hours, or longer.*

*Average cost, from 10s. to 12s., but expensive at Christmas, on account of the great demand.*

*Sufficient: A moderate-sized turkey for 7 or 8 persons.*

### To Roast a Turkey [sic]

*The best Way to roast a Turkey is to loosen the Skin on the Breast of the Turkey, and fill it with Force-Meat made thus: Take a Quarter of a Pound of Beef Sewet, as many Crumbs of Bread, a little Lemon-peel, an Anchovy, some Nutmeg, Pepper, Parsley, and a little Thyme; chop and beat them all well together, mix them with the Yolk of an Egg, and stuff up the Breast; when you have no Sewet Butter will do: Or you may make your Force-Meat thus: Spread Bread and Butter thin, and grate some Nutmeg over it; when you have enough roll it up, and stuff the Breast of the Turkey; then roast it of a fine Brown, but be sure to pin some white Paper on the Breast till it is near enough.*

*You must have good Gravy in the Dish*

*Hannah Glasse, The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy, 1747*

### Traditional Roast Turkey with Pork Forcemeat Stuffing

6.5kg turkey

200g butter, softened

Salt

pepper

Pork forcemeat stuffing for the carcass

**Pork forcemeat stuffing**

500g pork mince

50g butter

1 large onion, finely chopped

1 celery stick, finely chopped

2 tablespoons chopped parsley

1 tablespoon chopped sage

1 cup fresh breadcrumbs

Grated rind and juice of 1 lemon

1 egg, lightly beaten

Wash the turkey inside and out then dry with a clean cloth. Remove neck and giblets, and set aside for use in Giblet stock.

First, stuff the turkey. Put the forcemeat into the body cavity and cover the stuffing with a piece of bread. Pull the skin gently over the stuffing and secure with skewers. Tie the legs together with string.

Arrange two large sheets of foil across the roasting tin, one widthways and the other lengthways. Spray the foil with cooking oil.

Lay the turkey on its back and rub generously with butter, making sure the bones are well covered. Next, season the turkey all over with salt and pepper. Now, wrap the turkey in loose foil and place in a 220°C preheated oven for 40 minutes. Decrease the temperature to 170°C and cook for 3 ½ hours. Increase the temperature to 200°C and remove the turkey. Take off the foil from top and sides of the bird.

Baste the turkey thoroughly and return to the oven for a further 30-45 minutes for a golden finish. Give the turkey as much basting as possible during this final stage.

Pork forcemeat stuffing: Place the meat in a bowl. Melt the butter in a pan, then add the onion and celery and cook until soft. Allow to cool. Add the cooked onion and celery to the mince. Add the parsley, sage, breadcrumbs, lemon, egg, salt and pepper. Store in the refrigerator until ready to stuff your turkey.

Serves 8