

This is the real work that goes into recipe development. It's not polished or perfect. It's a mix of shifting ideas, constant note-taking, small adjustments, and quiet trial and error. I write things down to understand the dish as it grows and changes, and eventually the recipe reveals itself. These are a few of my notes to self for my Golden Orchard Mugolio-Cider Turkey.

THE PROCESS:

Golden Orchard Mugolio–Cider Turkey Brine

Cold-mixed. Designed for a 13 to 16 pound turkey with mugolio, cider, and crushed fresh herbs.

Ingredients

- 1 gallon apple cider
- 1 cup cold water

- 1 jar roasted chicken Better Than Bouillon
- 2 tablespoons white pepper
- 1/2 cup whole black peppercorns
- 2 fresh poultry blend packets, 0.5 oz each
- 1 fresh rosemary pack, 0.5 oz
- 2 packets Lipton onion soup mix
- 1/2 cup mugolio syrup
- 1 tablespoon toasted garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 3 ounces Kinder's Caramelized Onion Butter seasoning
- 1 ounce Kinder's Buttery Steakhouse seasoning
- 1 teaspoon baking soda

Instructions

1. Prep the Herbs

Crush the poultry blend herbs and the rosemary with your hands only. Bruise the leaves well so the oils release into the brine.

2. Build the Brine

In a large container or stockpot, add:

apple cider, cold water, roasted chicken Better Than Bouillon, Lipton onion soup mix, mugolio syrup, garlic powder, onion powder, Kinder's Caramelized Onion Butter seasoning, and Kinder's Buttery Steakhouse seasoning.

Stir until everything dissolves and is evenly distributed.

3. Add the Aromatics

Stir in the crushed herb packets, white pepper, and whole black peppercorns.

4. Add the Baking Soda

Mix in 1 teaspoon baking soda.

This slightly raises the pH which improves moisture retention, tenderness, and browning without softening the meat.

5. Brining Method

- 1.Place the raw turkey inside a turkey oven bag.
- 2.Pour all of the brine into the bag over the turkey.
- 3.Expel as much air as possible from the bag.
- 4.Tie the bag shut tightly so the turkey stays fully surrounded by brine.
- 5.Place the sealed oven bag inside a large stockpot for support.
- 6.Refrigerate.

Brining Schedule

Brine for 4 full days.

Turn the entire bagged turkey over once per day so every side stays fully exposed to the brine.

My Mugolio–Cider Whole Turkey: 24-Hour Dry, Sous Vide, and High-Heat Roast Finish

After brining the turkey for four days in my mugolio–cider mixture, I pull it out, and rinse it skin side only and dry it thoroughly. I let it sit just long enough for the surface moisture to disappear so the skin is easy to work with. I cut a small piece from the flesh from within the bird cavity and cook it to have a taste for flavor. If satisfied, proceed, if not I tweak my compound butter that I will make to be saltier if needed.

I make a deep brown butter I fold in powdered sage, smoked paprika, orange and lime zest, a touch of nutmeg, white pepper, and a very restrained amount of mugolio. The goal is to echo the brine, not overpower it. and let it cool until it's firm enough to pour into a piping bag and tie. Once it hits that perfect texture, I allow it to cool enough to pour into a piping bag, place in the fridge and allow it to fully firm, with the milk solids cooked off, the butter is softer than cream butter, I with massage it when I'm ready to pipe it into my bird to make it the right consistency.

I load the compound butter into a large piping bag and carefully separate the skin along the breasts, thighs, and legs. I pipe long, smooth ribbons under the skin and use my

hands to sheet it out into a thin, even layer. No pockets, no bulges — everything stays flat and controlled beneath the skin.

Once the butter is in place, I truss the bird using the Chef steps method for how to truss a chicken. (<https://www.chefsteps.com/activities/tips-tricks-best-way-to-truss-a-chicken>)

I place the turkey uncovered in a roaster on a rack in the refrigerator for 24 to 36 hours. This fully dries and tightens the skin before sous vide, and it firms the butter underneath. It sets the structure exactly the way I want it.

The next day, the bird goes into a 15×20 sealing bag. I set the bag on my counter top slide the turkey in legs-first, I dry the top edge and seal it on “seal only,” since the vacuum sealer is only 11 inches. I cut the corner of the unsealed portion of the bag, to facilitate fitting into the vacuum sealer then add a vacuum seal and a second seal. The entire bird goes into a second bag for security, repeat the process.

To ensure it's all sealed, allow the bird to sit for at least 30 min and see if the seal was compromised. It must be sealed for sous vide.

I sous vide the whole turkey at 150°F for 12 to 20 hours, weighted down and tied to cast iron weights so it stays fully submerged. When it's done, the sealed bag goes straight into an ice bath for about an hour, then into the refrigerator until I'm ready to roast. I do this one day ahead.

On roast day, I open the bag, save all the juices for my gravy, and set the turkey on a rack. The skin is already dry from the pre-SV drying, I blot away condensation, brush with Jamaican browning sauce (caramel color) for color, light brush applications, set to air dry and cool for an hr uncovered

Right before roasting, I brush the entire exterior with neutral oil. No butter. Oil gives me the crispest, cleanest finish and lets the mugolio and brown-butter aromatics speak without interference.

I roast the turkey at 400°F for 10 to 15 minutes, watching closely because the mugolio and brown butter underneath accelerate color. As soon as the skin hits deep golden and perfectly crisp, it's done. I give it a short 20–30 minute rest and carve. Finish with more browning sauce if some spots need a darker touch up.

What comes out is a whole bird with perfect structure, beautifully cooked end-to-end, subtle mugolio pine-caramel expression in the meat and fat, and a lacquer-crisp, glassy skin finish.