



ABEL AND JO'S RECIPE

Cajun Fried Turkey (Dinde Frite)

Makes about 10 main-dish servings

When the older Prudhomme children were youngsters, the family spent Christmas and Easter with their Prudhomme grandparents. Abel remembers that Dad's parents raised turkeys, geese, guinea hens, and ducks and that Grandma Prudhomme cooked all the different fowl for Christmas and Easter dinners. That was the only time the family had turkey in those early years. Later, Elden and Odelia Mae often brought a turkey with them from New Orleans when they came to visit at Thanksgiving and New Year's, but the family didn't ever raise turkeys, geese, or ducks.

Abel and Jo serve fried turkey fairly often for special company and on holidays. This is a relatively new dish in South Louisiana (created about seven years ago), and it's quite the rage. It originated in the Acadiana Parishes (Cajun country), as did many of South Louisiana's favorite and best dishes. The frying method produces a turkey with wonderfully moist meat that contrasts beautifully with the crunchy skin. Abel injects the turkey meat with a mixture of seasoning vegetables, spices, stock, and butter, so the meat is seasoned throughout. In Cajun country, almost everyone fries turkey in pork lard.

Abel and Jo serve candied yams or baked sweet potatoes, rice dressing, potato salad, and cranberry sauce with the turkey. (They use the turkey carcass to make an excellent stock for gumbo and soup.)

If at all possible, select a fresh (never frozen) turkey and one that has not been injected with butter, seasonings, or other flavorings. You will need a food injector (page 5) with a fairly large hole to inject the turkey with the seasoning purée. Do this a day ahead, then cover and refrigerate until ready to cook.

It is really best to fry the turkey outdoors, using a butane burner or other outdoor cooking equipment. Be sure to place the burner or other equipment on a concrete slab or some type of solid, level, and

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nonslippery surface. (A few drops of oil will probably bubble over, so have some old towels handy for wiping up slippery spots.)

Whether you fry the turkey indoors or out, you will need a heat source capable of producing a lot of heat quickly, so you can maintain a constant, moderately hot (350°) oil temperature while the turkey is frying.

And, while frying, you have to be very careful to avoid splashing or sloshing the very hot oil on you or anyone else close by. We cannot overstress this! Be certain that any possible distractions—including children—are under control. To avoid possible burns (we learned the hard way!), we strongly advise you to have a complete "dress rehearsal" (as described in the recipe) before you begin heating the large volume of oil.

Seasoning mix:

- ✓ 2 teaspoons salt
- ✓ 2 teaspoons ground red pepper (preferably cayenne)
- 1 (10- to 12-pound) dressed turkey, preferably fresh (never frozen), and not injected with butter, seasonings, or other flavorings
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ✓ ¾ cup finely chopped onions
- ✓ ¼ cup finely chopped celery
- ✓ 3 tablespoons minced garlic
- ✓ 2 tablespoons **Ground Hot Pepper Vinegar**, peppers only (page 357)
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ground red pepper (preferably cayenne)
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- ½ cup **Basic Turkey** or **Chicken Stock** (page 18)
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- About 5 gallons vegetable oil for frying

Thoroughly combine the seasoning mix ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.

To prepare the turkey: If your turkey comes with a metal prong that holds the cavity closed, remove and set it aside. Remove the giblets and neck from the turkey. (Remember to check both ends for the giblets—they can be packed in either or both places.) Place tur-

key and neck in a large pan. (Use giblets in another recipe.) If your turkey comes with a plastic "pop-up" doneness indicator, be sure to remove and discard it. Set pan aside.

In a large skillet, melt the butter over high heat until half melted. Add the onions and sauté about 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the celery, garlic, Ground Hot Pepper Vinegar peppers, the 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, the 1 tablespoon red pepper, and the black pepper. Cook until mixture is a rich golden brown, about 3 minutes, stirring and scraping pan bottom frequently. Add the stock and Worcestershire and bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and immediately transfer mixture to a blender; blend on highest speed until mixture is a very smooth purée, pushing sides down as needed to make sure every bit of the vegetables is finely puréed (so it won't stop up the injector needle).

Rinse and drain turkey well. While purée is still hot, pour it into the food injector and inject the purée into the turkey: Insert to the bone or to the depth of the injector needle, without piercing through to the cavity. To fill the injection hole with the purée as much as possible, from bone to surface of bird, begin to draw the needle out as you inject the purée. Make holes about 2 inches apart and use most of the purée in the meatiest areas; be sure to inject some of the purée in the upper joint of the wing, too. Pour any remaining purée (the part that won't go through the injector) into the cavity of the turkey and rub it over the inner surface. Set turkey aside.

Sprinkle the reserved seasoning mix evenly over the bird and inside the cavity, rubbing it in by hand and using it all. Place the neck inside the cavity. Close the legs and tail together with the metal prong (or fold legs back into skin flaps, or tie legs together with kitchen twine). Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Equipment: Assemble all equipment and utensils before starting to fry the turkey. You will need:

1. A butane burner or other heat source with adjustable control capable of producing a strong flame.
2. A very deep pot (8-gallon size or larger) so the turkey will be totally submerged in hot oil with plenty of room left over—a depth of several extra inches for the oil to bubble in without bubbling over.
3. A large boiling or fry-basket (large enough for the turkey to fit inside with room to spare) that fits the pot; the turkey will be slipped into and lifted out of the bubbling hot oil in the basket.
4. A thermometer that reads up to at least 400° and has a long

probe and clip so it can be left in the hot oil while the turkey fries.

5. Two strong and heatproof utensils (two 20-inch, or longer, barbecuing forks work well for this) to use for turning the turkey over in case it doesn't stay submerged in the oil. (Or you can weight the turkey down to keep it submerged while frying by inserting a long-handled heatproof fork securely under the metal prong or by pressing down on the turkey with a strong and heatproof utensil. But don't weight it down with anything so broad that it will keep a spot of skin from frying crisp.)

6. A large platter or pan lined with several thicknesses of paper bags to drain the turkey once it's fried.

7. Plenty of hot pads (potholders).

8. Old towels to place on the ground around the burner in case oil bubbles over and makes the surrounding area slippery.

Dress rehearsal: Let the turkey sit at room temperature for 1 hour before frying. Place the turkey on its back inside the boiling or fry-basket. Place the basket in the *empty* pot and measure the turkey's height in the pot with a ruler; be sure to include in the measurement the thickness of the basket bottom and any space between the basket bottom and the pan bottom. Remove basket and turkey from the pot. Place pot on the burner and fill it with oil at least up to the height of the total measurement made with the ruler. (Remember that the turkey itself, as well as the basket, will displace some of the oil, making the oil come up higher in the pot.)

Before heating the oil, have the "dress rehearsal." Drain off any liquid that has accumulated in or under the turkey and pat the turkey dry, so no water will get into the oil and make the oil pop when heated. Place the turkey in the basket, then rehearse in detail how you will maneuver the turkey throughout the cooking process.

First, practice slipping basket and turkey slowly and with total control into the cold oil, so the oil will slosh the least amount possible—and definitely not out of the pot! Then practice removing basket and turkey with no sloshing of oil. Also practice how you will turn the turkey over, if need be, while it's cooking. This run-through should help you determine how much sloshing of oil to expect so you can make any necessary adjustments in order to work safely and competently when the oil is hot. (Be sure to wear closed shoes and appropriate clothing—no bathing suits, please!—while frying the turkey.)

Poultry & Game

To fry the turkey: Remove basket and turkey from the cold oil. Heat the oil to 400°. *Very carefully and slowly* lower the basket containing the turkey into the hot oil. Immediately adjust flame or heat source down slightly and maintain a temperature lowered to as close to 350° as possible. You may have to adjust flame up again. Oil should be hot enough to bubble during frying but not so hot that it burns.

Make sure the turkey is either submerged completely while frying (weight it down if necessary), or turn it carefully, so oil doesn't slosh, about every 10 to 15 minutes. Let the turkey fry until the juices run clear when you insert a skewer into the breast meat. Or check doneness of meat by removing basket from hot oil and cutting the meat to the bone at the thigh-hip joint where meat is densest; the meat should look pink but not raw. Total frying time will be from 35 to 45 minutes. The fried turkey will look very dark brown when done. Don't be afraid that it has burned; this is the right color.

Carefully remove basket and turkey from the hot oil and place the turkey, breast side *down*, on a platter or pan lined with several thicknesses of paper bags and let drain about 5 minutes, then turn turkey over to drain and cool about 15 minutes more before slicing. Carve as you normally do and serve immediately.

PAUL AND K'S RECIPE

Turducken®

(K-Paul's Thanksgiving Dinner)

Makes 15 to 25 main-dish servings

Paul and K coined the term "turducken" by combining the names of the turkey, duck, and chicken used in the recipe. It's a lot of fun to let your guests think you're serving them a regular holiday turkey. When you begin to carve it, they will be surprised to see how you cut right through the "bones"!