

Bread Stuffing with Sausage, Dried Cherries, and Pecans

From the episode: *A Slow and Easy Thanksgiving*

Serves 10 to 12

Two pounds of chicken wings can be substituted for the turkey wings. If using chicken wings, separate them into 2 sections (it's not necessary to separate the tips) and poke each segment 4 or 5 times. Also, increase the amount of broth to 3 cups, reduce the amount of butter to 2 tablespoons, and cook the stuffing for only 60 minutes (the wings should register over 175 degrees at the end of cooking). Use the meat from the cooked wings to make salad or soup.

INGREDIENTS

- 2** pounds hearty white sandwich bread (20 to 22 slices), cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 16 cups)
- 3** pounds turkey wings , divided at joints (see photo) (see note)
- 2** teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1** pound bulk pork sausage
- 4** tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter , plus extra for baking dish
- 1** large onion , chopped fine (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 3** celery ribs , chopped fine (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 2** teaspoons table salt
- 2** tablespoons minced fresh thyme leaves
- 2** tablespoons minced fresh sage leaves
- 1** teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 1/2** cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 3** large eggs
- 1** cup dried cherries
- 1** cup pecan halves , toasted and chopped fine

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Adjust oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions and heat oven to 250 degrees. Spread bread cubes in even layer on 2 rimmed baking sheets. Bake until edges have dried but centers are slightly moist (cubes should yield to pressure), 45 to 60 minutes, stirring several times during baking. (Bread can be toasted up to 1 day in advance.) Transfer to large bowl and increase oven temperature to 375 degrees.

2. Use tip of paring knife to poke 10 to 15 holes in each wing segment. Heat oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until it begins to shimmer. Add wings in single layer and cook until golden brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Flip wings and continue to cook until golden brown on second side, 4 to 6 minutes longer. Transfer wings to medium bowl and set aside.

3. Return skillet to medium-high heat and add sausage; cook, breaking sausage into ½-inch pieces with wooden spoon, until browned, 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer sausage to paper towel-lined plate, leaving rendered fat in skillet.

4. Heat butter with rendered fat in skillet over medium heat. When foaming subsides, add onion, celery, and ½ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are softened but not browned, 7 to 9 minutes. Add thyme, sage, and pepper; cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add 1 cup broth and bring to simmer, using wooden spoon to scrape browned bits from bottom of pan. Add vegetable mixture to bowl with dried bread and toss to combine.

5. Grease 13 by 9-inch baking dish with butter. In medium bowl, whisk eggs, remaining 1½ cups broth, remaining 1½ teaspoons salt, and any accumulated juices from wings until combined. Add egg/broth mixture, cherries, pecans, and sausage to bread mixture and gently toss to combine; transfer to greased baking dish. Arrange wings on top of stuffing, cover tightly with aluminum foil, and place baking dish on rimmed baking sheet.

6. Bake on lower-middle rack until thickest part of wings registers 175 degrees on instant-read thermometer, 60 to 75 minutes. Remove foil and transfer wings to dinner plate to reserve for another use. Using fork, gently fluff stuffing. Let rest 5 minutes before serving.

TECHNIQUE

TURKEY WINGS TO THE RESCUE

Baking stuffing with browned turkey wings on top creates the same rich savoriness of stuffing cooked inside the bird. Here is the basic formula; see the recipes above for instructions on adding meat and fruit.

1. Prep wings

Cut through the joint with a sharp chef's knife. If the turkey wing comes with a tip, cut through this joint as well.



2. Brown Wings

Sear the turkey wings to trigger the flavor-producing Maillard reaction. Remove them from the skillet.



3. Sauté Aromatics

Cook the chopped onions and celery in rendered fat and butter to develop a savory flavor base.



4. Deglaze with Broth

Deglaze the pan with broth to release the fond and capture every last bit of flavor. Add mixture to dried bread cubes.



5. Top, Cover, Bake

Top the stuffing with the browned wings, cover with aluminum foil to trap moisture, and bake.



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