



## A Café Sam Report: Turkey Brining 101

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you will never cook another one without brining it first.”

Brining is like marinating to the extent that meat is soaked in liquid prior to cooking – the main difference is that marinades generally involve acids used to tenderize the protein while brines involve salt saturated with water to retain moisture during the cooking process. Also, marinades are usually designed to add various flavors, and while brines can be additionally seasoned most often they are a standard salt solution.

When salt is used as a dry rub, it draws moisture out of the protein and acts as a preservative. However, when salt is saturated with water to act as a brine it does not draw moisture out. Instead, brining actually keeps moisture in meat by hydrating muscle cells – and the method works particularly well with poultry.

Brining works well with poultry because the dark meat on the legs take longer to cook than the breast – no need to get into the science about that. While the legs are taking more time to cook through, the brine is doing its part to keep the breast nice and moist in the meantime. And that brings us to the juicy Thanksgiving turkey you will be cooking this year – thanks to brining.

The easy part of brining is the recipe: the standard brine formula is simply two cups of kosher salt for two gallons of water. The hard part of brining is finding an appropriately sized container (a non corrosive pot or a plastic bucket) and space in the refrigerator. You need to submerge your turkey in the brine for six to eight hours and keep it cold (below 40 degrees) during this time. (Note: if you don't have room in the refrigerator, a styrofoam cooler and ice packs to keep the turkey cold works well).

After brining the turkey, rinse it thoroughly, and then proceed to season it as usual. Once your first turkey has taken the plunge, you will never cook another one without brining it first. It really makes a big difference.

As a final note, all of your efforts will be for naught if the turkey is not cooked to the proper “temperature.” A juicy turkey needs to come out of the oven at the right time - brined or not. To check for the right temperature, cut the skin between the leg of the turkey and the body, and look down to inspect the juice that pools at the joint between them. Once the blood is gone from the juice and the juice appears clear, your turkey is cooked to perfection.