

Cooking a Caveny Farm Bourbon Red Heritage Turkey

We at Caveny Farm have been raising and cooking Bourbon Red Heritage turkeys for over 15 years, and have tried quite a few recipes and methods. If you have a favorite method that is a tradition in your family, these turkeys work well. For example, we have some customers who put the turkey in a roasting bag, cook it until “done”, and the whole bird comes out of the oven at about 185°F. However, for extra tasty turkey, it is better to cook the white and the dark meat to different temperatures (140°F for the breast, 185°F for everything else).

“...*WE NEVER COOK A WHOLE TURKEY*”

Since Bourbon Red turkeys were the most commonly eaten turkey in the United States before the development of the broad breasted bronze or white

turkey, we consulted old cookbooks for cooking recommendations. We found that most recommended to cook low and slow, but also found recipes for roasting a turkey quickly in a hot oven. Our family has found that both methods can produce great results ***especially if the turkey is cut into pieces before cooking.***

We rely on guidance from two cookbooks that we often reference:

1. Julia and Jacques *Cooking at Home* by Julia Child and Jacques Pépin, with David Nussbaum © 1999 by A La Carte Communications, Published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.; and
2. The Preservation Kitchen *The Craft of Making and Cooking with Pickles, Preserves and Aigre-doux* by Paul Virant with Kate Leahy ©2012 by Paul Virant and Kate Leahy, Published by Ten Speed Press.

In Julia and Jacques, I recommend turning to page 281 and read Chef Child’s narrative. Julia’s recipe for Deconstructed Turkey is accompanied by pictures for cutting up a turkey. In The Preservation Kitchen, starting on page 241, Paul Virant goes through his philosophy and method for preparing Thanksgiving dinner and a timeline to make things come together in a relaxed way. Chef Virant also cuts the turkey into breast, wings, thighs, legs and back pieces. We like this method so well that now we never cook a whole turkey.

The two main reasons both chefs cut the turkey into pieces before cooking are:

1. it is easier to cook each piece to the proper temperature;
2. it is a lot easier to cut up a turkey when it is cold than when it is hot.

The breast cooks quickly and should have a final resting temperature of no more than 140°F. The rest of the cuts should be cooked to at least 185°F. Remember, these are heritage birds raised on pasture. They have had 6-7 months to exercise their legs and flap their wings. At harvest, they are mature adult birds with toned muscles that require cooking long enough to turn muscle fibers into gelatin.

Cooking is easy.

Always use a meat thermometer. Roast the breast uncovered at 425°F (with perhaps a little butter for basting) until an instant

read thermometer reads 135°F. Let rest at least 20 minutes. Roast legs, thighs, and wings at 325°F until an instant read thermometer registers 185°F. Use back, neck and extra skin for stock/soup. Our turkeys are well fed so you should have fat rendered out in the roasting process. Use it to make a roux to thicken stock for gravy.



CAVENY FARM BOURBON RED HERITAGE
TURKEYS ARE TENDER, TASTY, AND NATURALLY
JUICY, RAISED ONLY ON PASTURE AND LOCALLY-
SOURCED FEED.

To Brine or not to Brine?

We prefer to salt, a type of dry brine, the pieces about 36 to 48 hours prior to cooking. Instructions for salting are found in our turkey leg recipe. Use 1/3 to 1/2 teaspoon of salt per pound of turkey for all pieces except the back. The important part here is to wrap the salted pieces tightly in plastic wrap to make sure the natural juices stay in the meat. For this reason, we remove the breastbone at time of cutting to make it easier to wrap the breast halves. If you prefer a wet brine, Chef Virant includes a recipe on page 243.

Enjoy!