

Maple and Balsamic Glazed Heritage Turkey

Thanksgiving: Back to Our Roots | November 2005



- 1½ CUPS UNSALTED BUTTER, SOFTENED
- 1 CUP PURE MAPLE SYRUP, DIVIDED
- ⅓ CUP SNIPPED FRESH SAGE
- 2–3 TBSP. COARSE SEA SALT
- 2–3 TBSP. MIXED PEPPERCORNS OR BLACK PEPPERCORNS, CRUSHED
- 1 18- TO 20-LB. HERITAGE BREED TURKEY
COUNTRY HAM AND WILD RICE STUFFING
- 2 TBSP. UNSALTED BUTTER, SOFTENED
- 2 TBSP. BALSAMIC VINEGAR

In a large bowl beat the 1½ cups softened butter, ½ cup syrup, sage, 1 tablespoon salt, and 1 tablespoon peppercorns with an electric mixer until smooth. Shape into a 15-inch-long log on a piece of waxed paper, using paper to help form log. Wrap and chill log about 1 hour or until firm. Slice into ½-inch-thick rounds.

Meanwhile, rinse the inside of the turkey; pat dry with paper towels. Gently separate the skin from the turkey breasts and tops of drumsticks by easing a paring knife or your fingers between the skin and the meat to make 2 pockets that extend all the way down to the neck cavity and over the drumsticks. Pull neck skin to the back; fasten with a skewer.

Place half of the maple butter rounds in each pocket. Sprinkle remaining salt and peppercorns in the cavity and over the surface of the turkey.*

Place about 5 cups of the *Country Ham and Wild Rice Stuffing* in a large microwave-safe bowl. Micro-cook, covered, on 100-percent power (high) for 3 minutes, stirring every 30 seconds. Loosely fill main cavity with the warm stuffing, packing it lightly. Spoon all the remaining stuffing into a greased 3-quart baking dish; cover and chill until ready to bake. Tuck the turkey legs under the band of skin, if there is one, or tie the legs to the tail with 100-percent-cotton kitchen string. Twist wing tips under the back.

Place turkey, breast side up, on a rack in a shallow roasting pan. Insert a meat thermometer into the center of an inside thigh muscle. The thermometer should not touch bone. Cover loosely with foil. Place turkey in a 325° oven. Roast until meat thermometer registers 150°, about 4 to 4½ hours. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan heat remaining 2 tablespoons butter, remaining ½ cup maple syrup, and balsamic vinegar until boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 4 to 5 minutes until slightly thickened.

Remove foil from the turkey; increase oven temperature to 350°. Add covered stuffing casserole to the oven; roast 20 minutes more. Brush turkey with all of the maple-balsamic glaze. Roast turkey 15 to 30 minutes more or until the thickest part of the thigh reaches 180° and stuffing reaches 165°. Remove turkey from oven and tent with foil. Let turkey stand 30 minutes before removing stuffing and carving. (Set roasting pan with pan juices aside to make gravy, if desired.) While the turkey stands, continue to bake the stuffing in casserole until heated through. Makes 20 to 25 servings.

***TURKEY RECIPE MAKE-AHEAD TIP:** Prepare turkey to this point. Do not stuff. Cover and chill up to 24 hours. Continue as directed above.