

# CHANUKAH FOOD

## [HOW TO COOK A PERFECT TURKEY]

by ELANA HORWICH

It took a lot of stress and hard work to come up with this hassle-free turkey. Don't think I didn't personally slave just because I say it's the easiest ever. It wasn't easy to get here. Cookbooks were scoured, recipes were sent from friends, gravies were made and thrown out, my refrigerator was packed to the brim with cooked and uncooked turkey, butchers were consulted, and friends were summoned over to taste and critique. Finally, it has arrived.

### Let's start with what makes this bird so darn easy.

1. **No brining.** I call for a kosher turkey, which eliminates the need for brining. Kosher meat is salted and, in general, this creates automatically juicy poultry. Buying kosher, whether you're Jewish or not, will save you time, stress and a mess.

2. **No basting.** The idea of having to open the oven at regular intervals to baste completely obliterates all desires in me to make a turkey. I don't know why. I am sure it's not such a big deal. It's simply a psychological hurdle I don't want to overcome. My food is good. I own a cooking

school. People pay me to learn to make my food. I have never *ever* basted, and I'm not starting now. I don't even own a baster. The End.

3. **Quick cooking.** We're talking just under two hours for a small bird. And less than three for a larger one. Quicker doesn't necessarily mean easier, I admit. If the turkey was in the oven for five hours and I didn't have to touch it, I'd be equally as happy. But cooking the bird at a high temperature (450 F) as culinary queen Ruth Reichl recommends in *Gourmet* actually locks in the juices. And who's complaining that our turkey will be done so soon!

4. **No skin lifting and fancy flavorings.** It's not needed. I've tried. We're sticking to olive oil, salt and pepper. The flavors will come from our pan juices... see below.

### Now here are the tricks to make our easy turkey extra yummy.

A. We're going to start roasting the turkey **breast down** so all the juices run into the white-meat breast. Then we turn it over to get a golden brown all over. That's the only time you'll have to



Elana Horwich, far left, with her cooking students in her "Thanksgiving Turkey and Desserts" class.  
Photo courtesy of Elana Horwich

touch the turkey as it cooks.

B. We're going to stuff the turkey cavity with **some roughly chopped and whole vegetables.** This will "insulate" our turkey meat and keep it tender, but it will also contribute to a delicious flavor in the pan juices. This turkey will be served

*au jus*, meaning with dollied-up pan juices and no floury thickening agents that would technically make it gravy. Also, we are not putting stuffing into this turkey. That would not make it The East Turkey Ever. Please see my Nobel Prize-Win-

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