

# fine Cooking

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TALK  
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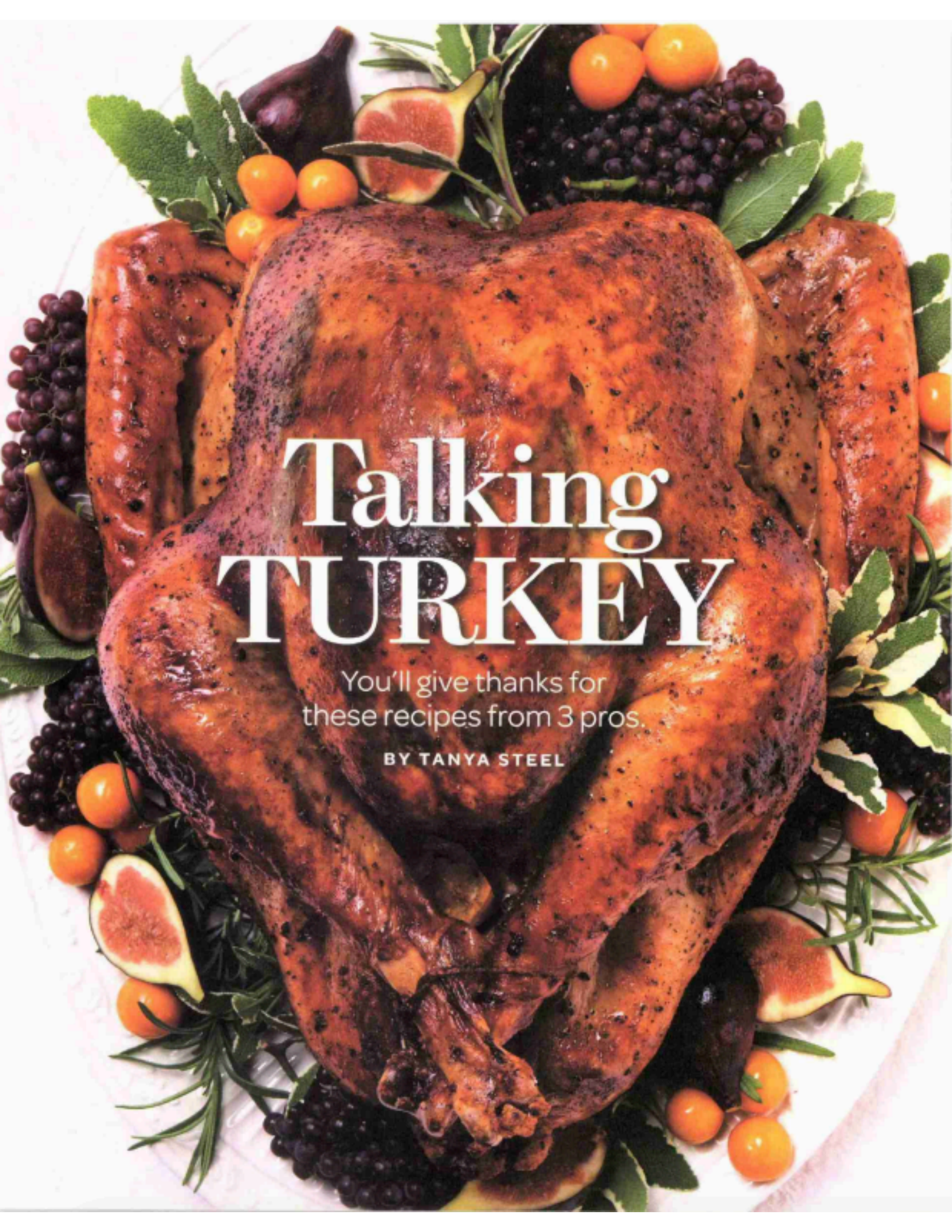
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A large, roasted turkey is the central focus, presented on a white platter. The turkey is surrounded by an assortment of fresh ingredients: clusters of dark purple grapes, bright orange cherry tomatoes, sliced figs, and various green herbs including rosemary and sage. The background is a plain, light color, making the vibrant colors of the food stand out.

# Talking TURKEY

You'll give thanks for  
these recipes from 3 pros.

BY TANYA STEEL



IT'S THE SUPER BOWL OF FOOD. NO DAY OF THE YEAR HAS THE WEIGHT OF THANKSGIVING. And while for many of us it's a time to be with family and friends, sit around the table, break (corn)bread, and make memories—being sure to record those memories on every social platform with filters and special effects used unsparingly—for those hosting, it can be as stressful as game day is for pro players.

How do you cook a magazine-cover-ready bird, along with stuffing/dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, sides, and pie, and have everything ready at the same time? For 20 people? With a table set, wine uncorked, and flowers arranged? Yes, it's tough.

As the main (OK, only) real cook in my extended family and friends group, it has always fallen to me to produce Thanksgiving. And a production is what it has become. After days of shopping, cooking, and cleaning, I find myself giving thanks when it's all over. This year, it's going to be different. I'm finally going to wise up and get advice from the pros—and actually follow it.

For starters, I asked three chefs for their own turkey recipes, ones that they actually make at home on the big day. (I also got some of the chefs' favorite gravies.) While fairly straightforward, their recipes offer innovative twists that make them stand out from the classics. David Guas of Bayou Bakery in Arlington, Virginia, soaks his turkey in an apple-cider brine before deep-frying it. Emily Brekke of North End Grill in New York City has been perfecting her technique since she was a teen, using a Champagne-stock mixture to great effect. Luke Verhulst of Reserve Wine & Food in Grand Rapids, Michigan, ups the creative factor by making a decadently moist yet crisp turkey confit. (For one more delicious turkey, from chef Tim Hollingsworth of Otium in Los Angeles, visit [FineCooking.com/garlicandherbturkey](http://FineCooking.com/garlicandherbturkey)).

When we tested the recipes in the *Fine Cooking* kitchens, we were beyond impressed. The birds were moist, crisp, and flavorful—that is, all the things turkeys generally aren't. You're going to be surprised by how exceptional these birds are. They might just replace your old standby. I know this year, one of them will replace mine.

Before you get started, though, read the chefs' tips. They'll ease the stress of the day and, yes, help you score big at the Super Bowl of food.

*Tanya Steel is a Fine Cooking contributing senior editor.*

## Carving in 1, 2, 3

*What good is producing the perfect bird if you're then going to mangle the carving? That won't happen if you follow these steps.*



**1** Separate the legs and wings from the body by cutting through the joints.



**2** Cut vertically down along the breastbone on one side. Cut horizontally across two-thirds of the way down the bird's body to remove the entire breast. Repeat on the other side. Transfer to a platter.



**3** Slice the breasts and legs against the grain.





## WE GIVE THANKS TO... DAVID GUAS

David is chef-owner of **Bayou Bakery** in Arlington, Virginia, and Lil' B in Washington D.C. He is also host of the Travel Channel's *American Grilled*. He loves celebrating a Louisiana-style Thanksgiving with his family.

### David's Turkey Tip

Before frying, be sure the turkey is dry inside and out. To deep-fry, you don't want any liquid in or on the turkey, as this causes dangerous pops during frying and can make the oil expand and overflow while cooking. Also, remove it from the refrigerator about one hour before cooking, because a cold bird will lower the oil temperature too much.

## A Southern Thanksgiving Feast

Louisiana-Style Deep-Fried  
Turkey with Grandma's Gravy

Southern Bread Stuffing\*

Quick Collards with Bacon  
and Onions\*

Molasses Mashed Sweet  
Potatoes\*

\*Recipes at [FineCooking.com/  
thanksgivingmenus](http://FineCooking.com/thanksgivingmenus)





## Louisiana-style deep-fried turkey

Chef David Guas makes this turkey for his family every Thanksgiving. "A great reason to deep-fry your turkey is that it takes only 35 to 40 minutes to achieve a tender, juicy, crackling taste," he says. **Serves 8 to 10**

### FOR THE BRINE

- 5½ oz. kosher salt (1 cup Diamond Crystal or ½ cup Morton)
- 2 quarts apple cider
- 1 12-oz. bottle hot sauce, preferably Crystal (about 1½ cups)

### FOR THE TURKEY

- 1 12-lb. turkey, neck, giblets, plastic ties, and temperature gauge removed
- Peanut oil, for frying (about 3 gallons; more as needed)

### MAKE THE BRINE

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine the salt, 1 quart of the cider, and the hot sauce, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the salt dissolves, about 8 minutes. Pour into a zip-top brining bag or other large container, and add the remaining cider and 6½ cups water.

### BRINE THE TURKEY

Transfer the turkey to the bag with the brine, and refrigerate 8 to 10 hours or overnight, rotating the turkey in the bag occasionally to ensure that the entire bird comes in contact with the brine. (If you can't find a brining bag or a pot large enough, see p. 96 for instructions on how to brine a turkey in a cooler.)

Remove the turkey from the brine, and dry both the interior and exterior with paper towels. Prop the bird so that it is standing up on a large rimmed baking sheet to allow any remaining liquid from the cavity to drain.

### FRY THE TURKEY

When it's time to fry, tie the legs and tuck the wing tips behind the bird, and then put it into the fry basket. Measure the amount of oil needed by lowering the turkey into the fryer and filling with enough oil to cover (the turkey should be completely submerged in the oil), about 3 gallons. Remove the turkey from the oil, and put it on a large rimmed baking sheet. Heat the oil to 350°F.

Return the turkey to the fry basket, and then slowly lower it into the hot oil. Cook for about 40 minutes, or about 3 minutes per pound of turkey. Using a meat thermometer, check the turkey's temperature in a place between a leg and the cavity. Once the internal temperature reaches 165°F, turn off the fryer, and slowly lift the turkey from the oil, making sure all of the oil drains out of the cavity. Allow the turkey to rest on a serving platter for 20 to 30 minutes before carving. Serve with Grandma's Gravy (at right).

## grandma's gravy

The fried turkey may be the star, but it wouldn't be complete without this easy and tasty gravy from Guas's grandmother. **Makes about 3 cups**

- 2 Tbs. canola or vegetable oil
- 13 oz. assorted turkey parts, such as the neck, gizzard, and heart
- 1 large sweet onion, quartered
- 2 medium carrots, coarsely chopped (about 1½ cups)
- 2 medium ribs celery, coarsely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 2 quarts chicken stock
- 3 Tbs. all-purpose flour; more as needed
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a large pot, warm the oil over medium heat until shimmering. Add the turkey parts and cook, stirring frequently, until they begin to brown, about 2 minutes. Add the vegetables and cook, turning occasionally, until browned in places and beginning to soften, about 10 minutes.

Slowly add the stock while stirring and scraping up the brown bits on the bottom of the pan. Bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer. Cook until the vegetables are very soft and the stock has slightly reduced, about 1 hour.

Remove and discard the turkey and vegetables from the pot. Strain the broth through a fine-mesh strainer into a large liquid-measuring cup. Use a fat separator to remove the fat from the top of the stock; reserve the fat.

Add about 1 Tbs. of the turkey fat to the pot over medium heat, and whisk in 3 Tbs. flour. Cook, stirring with a whisk, for 1 minute.

Slowly add 5 cups of the stock, whisking continually. Once the stock is added, simmer until the gravy thickens, about 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with the turkey.

**Note:** If the gravy doesn't thicken enough, you can add flour 1 Tbs. at a time, but be sure to mix it with some of the gravy before adding it to the pan to prevent lumping. If the gravy thickens too much, whisk in some turkey or chicken stock.

**Pair With:** BELGIAN BLOND ALE This beer has it all—a fruity-spicy quality to complement the Louisiana flavors, creamy bubbles to accent the gravy, and a special-occasion quality perfect for a holiday.