

MIXOLOGY

Good Gravy

Whisk-in Some Whiskey This Thanksgiving



Written by Bill Burke



The rich aromas that fill our homes in late November every year are as welcome as the warmth and fellowship of the holiday season — but even the most lavish Thanksgiving feast could use a touch of something spirited.

This year, consider adding some Wild Turkey to your wild turkey.

With its complex, diverse character, whisky is a perfect partner for the main course, and depending on which whiskey, rye or bourbon you choose, your guests could experience notes and tastes ranging from caramel, brown sugar and orange peel, to almonds or spice, among many others.

Including a splash of spirits to your traditional recipes can add new dimensions of flavor, from start to finish, but it's best to begin at the beginning. A good brine gives the bird a moist, juicy texture, and since it allows the turkey to absorb the water and salt (and for our purposes, the whiskey), it's seasoned all the way through.

Woodford Reserve Turkey Brine

courtesy woodfordreserve.com

- 4 cups Woodford Reserve Bourbon or Rye Whiskey
- 2 gallons water
- 1 cup salt
- 3 cups sorghum
- 2 oranges, sliced — peel and all
- 2 tablespoons black peppercorns
- 12 bay leaves
- 6 cloves

Combine all ingredients together in a large pot and bring to a simmer until incorporated. Cool to 40 degrees. Brine the turkey overnight for best results.



The beauty of this gravy recipe is that it combines the unique and thematically unifying flavors of whiskey with the sweet (and regionally perfected) taste of maple syrup. While the recipe doesn't call for any specific brand or type of maple syrup, any self-respecting Vermonter would only opt for locally produced, real maple syrup.

Maple-Whiskey Turkey Gravy

courtesy foodnetwork.com

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| Turkey giblets and neck from one turkey (discard the liver) | 6 cups low-sodium chicken broth |
| ¼ cup whiskey | ¼ cup pure maple syrup |
| ¼ cup turkey fat from drippings | Kosher salt |
| ⅓ cup all-purpose flour | Freshly ground black pepper |

Put the giblets and neck in a small saucepan of water over medium heat and bring to a boil. Turn the heat to medium-low and simmer until the giblets are cooked — about 45 minutes to one hour. Remove the giblets and neck, set aside and keep the water in the saucepan.

In the turkey roasting pan (which should not have been cleaned), add back ¼ cup of turkey fat. Sprinkle in the flour and whisk it into the fat to form a paste. Whisk and cook the roux over medium-low heat until deep, golden brown.

Turn off the heat and add the whiskey, then turn the heat back on and whisk it in. Pour in the chicken broth, whisking the whole time, and then add the maple syrup. Allow it to cook and thicken for several minutes, whisking occasionally. Taste, then add salt and plenty of black pepper. Chop the giblets and add them to the gravy. Remove as much of the neck meat as you can and add it to the gravy, too. Serve immediately.

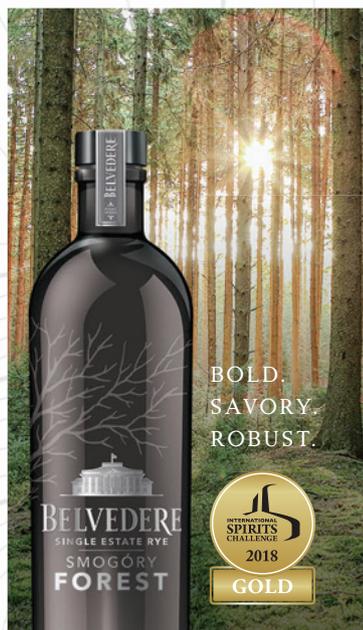


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MIXOLOGY: WHISK-IN SOME WHISKEY

This whiskey turkey glaze recipe calls for Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, which is a slightly different breed of America's Native Spirit thanks to the producer's charcoal filtering process. The black label with "Old No. 7" emblazoned across it is an instantly recognizable brand, but it's what's in the bottle that sets it apart. Jack Daniel's is made from corn, malted barley and rye, cave spring water from the Lynchburg, Tennessee distillery, and is mellowed drop-by-drop through 10 feet of hard sugar maple charcoal. It's a process that clearly alters the character of the whiskey. It goes in slightly bitter and heavy, and comes out light and sweet. And in this case, that's perfect for a Thanksgiving glaze.

Whiskey Turkey Glaze

courtesy primogrill.com

- ½ cup Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey
- ½ cup honey
- 1 whole orange (squeezed) or substitute with ¼ cup orange juice
- ½ stick butter

In a sauce pan on low heat, melt the butter and then slowly whisk in the honey and fresh orange juice until the mixture is bubbling mildly. Be careful not to scorch it. Remove from heat, allow to cool for a few minutes and then whisk in the whiskey. Set aside.

Baste the turkey with the glaze mixture every 30 minutes until it is fully cooked. (According to the site, the whiskey is not exposed to the heat of the brine or the glaze, so there will be alcohol content present.)

Mythbusting in the Kitchen

It's long been held that alcohol evaporates when used in cooking, but it turns out that it's not exactly the case. Alcohol does not completely 'cook off' when it is heated or used in a recipe. A study by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Nutrient Data Lab found that food baked or simmered in alcohol for 15 minutes retains 40% of the alcohol. After an hour, 25% of the alcohol remains. After two and a half hours, 5% remains.



PHOTO COURTESY THE PIONEERWOMAN.COM

There's nothing like Thanksgiving leftovers. Not too many people will argue this point, and it's been said that a turkey sandwich may be the best antidote to fight off the weariness brought on by Black Friday shopping. This recipe, crafted by Ree Drummond — the Pioneer Woman — transforms the delicious-yet-straightforward turkey sandwich into something remarkable. Try this with ground turkey or your Thanksgiving leftovers, because with this one, it's all about that whiskey barbecue sauce.

Spicy Whiskey BBQ Sliders

courtesy thepioneerwoman.com

- 2 pounds ground turkey
- Salt and pepper
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 whole large onion, diced
- ½ cup whiskey
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- ¼ cup jarred jalapeno slices
- 12 whole slider buns or dinner rolls, split

Form the meat into 12 miniature patties and salt and pepper them on both sides. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium-high heat and cook the patties until just about done in the middle, approximately 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove the patties from the skillet and set aside. Drain off all but 2 tablespoons of grease, then return the skillet to the stove.

Throw the diced onions in the skillet and stir to cook, about 3 minutes. Pour in whiskey (be careful if you're cooking over an open flame; turn it off momentarily to be extra careful) and stir. Allow the whiskey to reduce by half, about 2 to 3 minutes, then stir in jalapenos and the barbecue sauce.

Reduce the heat to low and place the patties in the barbecue sauce, turning to coat. Allow the patties to simmer in the sauce until everything's hot and bubbly.

Place the patties on individual buns and be sure to spoon extra sauce (with the jalapenos!) over the top of each one before topping with the other half of the bun. ☺