

A few weeks ago on America's Test Kitchen, test cook Dan Souza, demonstrated how to make a Porchetta-Style Turkey Breast. I roast boneless turkey breasts at least every two weeks. I've tried different dried seasoning blends and liquid basting sauces. This recipe, while time consuming, challenged my culinary skills.

First order of business was to locate a boneless turkey breast that still had its skin. I was able to purchase one at Palmer's Quality Meats in Neptune City, NJ. As I was preparing this for my husband and I, the butcher suggested I purchase half a breast, just over four pounds of meat; I also had him butterfly the breast. Palmer's gets their poultry from Goffle Road Poultry Farms in Wyckoff, NJ, which is located in Bergen County.

To prep the breast, I had to carefully remove the skin from the meat as this is essential in roasting and preparation of the meat. Normally one would purchase a porchetta made with pork belly. My son-in-law prepared this one year for Christmas dinner. While extremely delicious, its richness makes this a special occasion meal. Therefore, one made with turkey has the same flavor profile that includes garlic, fresh rosemary, fennel fronds or freshly ground fennel seeds and other seasonings.

America's Test Kitchen recipe gives directions for how to bone-out a bone-in turkey breast. While I can do this on bone-in chicken breasts, I preferred to have this done by a professional. One thing I didn't do was to prepare the porchetta-style turkey breast eight hours ahead of roasting. This would allow time for the herbs to penetrate the meat and for the exterior skin to dry out. Not only do you want flavorful meat, but you also want to achieve crackling skin on the exterior. You can also let the prepared roast sit for up to two days in the refrigerator. I only had several hours for mine to sit before cooking.

For the recipe you'll also need fennel seeds, black peppercorns, fresh rosemary, fresh sage, fresh thyme, fresh garlic cloves, kosher salt, extra-virgin olive oil and melted butter. All of the herbs, fennel seeds, peppercorns, salt and olive oil are combined to make a paste which is rubbed over the turkey. Using the skin to aid you, you fold/roll the turkey breast in the skin. Once you've done, you tie the meat with your pre-cut butcher's twine which will help the meat maintain its cylinder shape. Prior to roasting melted butter is brushed on the exterior.

The cooking method here is low and slow, 275° for 1-1/2 to 1-3/4 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 125°. In order to get a very crispy exterior, and finish cooking the meat, the oven temperature is increased to 500° for 15-25 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 145°. I didn't brush the butter on, but drizzled it. When it came time to cook at the high temperature, I had smoke coming from my oven and my smoke alarm going off.

I was quite proud of myself and how my Porchetta-Style Turkey came out. The flavor was out of this world. The meat was tender and juicy. The exterior skin came out crispy. Overall, it was a fabulous meal. Would I do it again? Yes, but I'll need to have a few more mouths to feed. At a little over four pounds, I'm able to get three meals out of this for my husband and I. I could make wonderful sandwiches with it. I'd toast the inside of a ciabatta roll, make an aioli spread, a slice of porchetta style turkey and maybe optional broccoli rabe on top. Now I'm hungry.