

Turkey on the Table, All Year Round

For one or two nights a year, turkey reigns supreme. A bur-nished bird, presented in all its Norman Rockwell perfection, is

A GOOD APPETITE

Melissa Clark

the focal point of Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners across the country.

The rest of the year? Well, let's just say that it's a long fall from grace to club sandwiches at the diner and joyless low-fat burgers.

There is no reason for this sad neglect. Just because we don't think to make it the star of a meal in May doesn't mean turkey won't taste as good as it did in November.

With this in mind, I spent a week finding new ways to enjoy it.

This meant no roasted whole birds. Been there, done that innumerable times. Instead, I concentrated on turkey parts, which are usually a good bargain all year long. In addition to ground meat and thinly sliced scallops, I found whole breasts tied into handsome boneless roasts. There were medieval-looking drumsticks begging to be roasted and eaten with bare hands. Even meaty, tender turkey necks could be excavated from my butcher's deep freezer when I asked.

Cooking the parts separately eliminated the familiar Thanksgiving stress of overdone breast meat and underdone thighs.

A couple of legs basted with a lightly sweet marinade of soy sauce, honey and star anise, roasted to perfection by themselves, although I confess that I ate them with a fork and knife.

I hacked the turkey necks into pieces with a cleaver and braised



ANDREW SCRIVANI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

them slowly, osso buco style. The necks were a lot more economical than veal shanks, although you might miss spooning translucent lumps of marrow from the bone.

For the ground turkey, I sought out dark meat, which is more flavorful and richer than ground breast. It wasn't hard to find, though in a pinch you could grind your own from drumstick meat pulsed in the food processor. Wanting a departure from the obvious (burgers, chili and meatloaf), I simmered the meat with pancetta into a rich and hearty ragu for whole-wheat pasta.

Lastly, I smeared a whole breast with a dried-fig tapenade, then roasted it until the meat was just cooked but still moist, a far cry from most roast turkey breasts I've endured.

The sweet and tangy tapenade was vaguely reminiscent of cranberry sauce, so I mixed it with mayonnaise for turkey sandwiches the next day. It was the perfect meal of leftovers, without any of the usual holiday fuss and mess.

Here is that recipe.

ROAST TURKEY BREAST WITH FIG-OLIVE TAPENADE

1/2 cup dried figs, trimmed
1/2 cup pitted kalamata olives
1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
2 small garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
2 anchovy fillets
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 boneless, skinless turkey breast, 2 to 2 1/2 pounds
1/2 teaspoon coarse kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Mayonnaise, for serving, optional.

1. Place the figs in a bowl and cover with boiling water. Let sit for 5 minutes, then drain and coarsely chop. In a food processor, combine the figs, olives, lemon juice, garlic and anchovies. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in the oil, and process until the mixture becomes a paste.

2. If the breast is tied up, untie it and pat dry; season with salt and pepper. Coat it with half the paste (reserve the remaining paste for serving). Roll up the turkey and secure it with kitchen twine. Let it rest for at least 30 minutes at room temperature or up to 24 hours, covered, in the refrigerator.

3. When you are ready to cook, heat the oven to 375 degrees. Place on a foil-lined baking sheet. Roast, turning once halfway through, until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the turkey reads 160 degrees, 45 minutes to 1 hour (it will continue to cook as it cools). Let stand 10 minutes before untying and slicing. Serve with remaining tapenade and mayonnaise on the side.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings.



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A Drama Queen, In the Spotlight

If dragon fruit were an aspiring actress, the Hollywood press would be hailing her as the latest "it" girl.

Suddenly the cactus-bred curio is appearing in too many places to count. Skyy is introducing a dragon-fruit-flavored vodka this spring. Celestial Seasonings recently began pairing powdered dragon fruit with green tea. There's a "Sumatra Dragonfruit" version of Bai, a thirst quencher made from the outer fruit of the coffee plant, a line of Lite Pom that blends a few swigs of dragon fruit with pomegranate juice, and a new cream liqueur called Dragon Kiss.

The fruit has made cameo appearances on national TV — as an ingredient on shows like "Marcel's Quantum Kitchen" and "Top Chef Masters" — and at a few local bars.

Whatever the context, dragon fruit has a knack for getting noticed. "A lot of people aren't even aware of what the fruit is, but I can tell you that everyone is attracted to it," said Kevin Gardner, the entrepreneur who has been introducing Dragon Kiss liqueur around the country. "When they see it, it seems to stimulate the senses of men and women."

Especially, it seems, if those men and women happen to specialize in marketing. "For a marketer, it's a dream come true, because how many dragon puns can you come up with?" said Andrea Conzonato, the chief marketing officer for Skyy vodka. "An orange is an orange. A raspberry is a raspberry. But then you find a dragon fruit, and you're like, Where did this come from? Why did I not know about this before?"

JEFF GORDINIER

Chips Make Their Way South of Vermont Border

A trip to Vermont is no longer the only way to obtain Gringo Jack's tortilla chips, which are made at the restaurant by the same name in Manchester.

These smallish flour chips can now be ordered online. Their munchability is driven by exceptional flakiness — a similar texture, if not taste, to that of the fried noodles offered in Chinese restaurants. The plain ones are fine; the whole-wheat version



has deeper flavor; and the spiced ones, hand-dusted with a ruddy, vibrant mixture, suit creamy dips and make a nice garnish for ceviche, salads and soups.

Gringo Jack's Tortilla Chips are \$4.50 for 8 ounces from gringo-jacks.com.

Once you get past the off-putting name and appearance, you will find that blood clams have a deliciously crisp succulence, and

a flavor that is not as briny as a littleneck or cherrystone clam.

Blood clams are popular in Asia. Now, clammers in New England, who find them from time to time, are starting to discover that there is a market for them here.

Dave Pasternack serves them raw with a citrus dressing at Esca and Eatery, or uses them in ceviche. Pasternack said opening them is a challenge, best done with an oyster knife inserted at the hinge. Blanching them in boiling water for 20 seconds is another method. (NYT)