THANKSGIVING SMOKED TURKEY

Pulled breast with Meathead-inspired jus + whole smoked drumsticks and thighs

Bird: 12-14 lb, pre-brined **Smoker:** 275°F **Plan:** Smoke Wednesday, serve Thursday

Recipe basis: Meathead Goldwyn, *Pulled Turkey With Jus*, adapted by Kim Severson (NYT, 2018). This is a make-ahead smoked adaptation, not the original roasting recipe. Quantities and timing below are adjusted for this plan.

At a glance: the finished meal

■ Pull **only the smoked breast meat**; dress lightly with jus.

■ Keep **both drumsticks and both thighs whole**, bone-in, skin-on, and reheat separately.

■ Make the jus Wednesday, reserving most for Thursday and for the table.

■ Reheat all refrigerated turkey to **165°F** Thursday; use a thermometer, not timing alone.

Ingredients and equipment

Turkey: One 12-14 lb pre-brined turkey; black pepper and optional unsalted herb seasoning. **Do not automatically add the original recipe's 2 tablespoons salt.** Check the package label for salt and seasoning.

Jus, approximately 1.5x the original recipe:

■ 1 1/2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil; turkey neck, giblets (except liver) and wing tips, if available

■ 3 carrots, roughly cut; 4-5 celery stalks, cut in thirds; 1-2 large onions, quartered

■ 2 1/4 cups dry white wine, divided: 1 1/2 cups for stock base and 3/4 cup for finishing (see smoked adaptation below)

■ 6 cups **unsalted** chicken or turkey stock; 1-2 garlic cloves; several sage leaves and 2-3 thyme sprigs

■ 1 1/2 teaspoons soy sauce; black pepper to taste; **salt only after tasting**

Equipment: Smoker, calibrated probe thermometer, saucepan/stockpot, strainer, cutting board, forks or clean food-safe gloves, shallow food-storage pans, foil, 2 shallow foil roasting pans, food thermometer, gravy boat.

TUESDAY | Preparation (20-30 minutes)

■ Confirm the bird is fully thawed; follow its package directions for handling a pre-brined bird.

■ Check smoker fuel, thermometer batteries, foil pans and refrigerator space.

■ Chop jus vegetables; refrigerate covered. Check that stock is unsalted.

■ Choose a Thursday serving time and use the countdown on the last page.

WEDNESDAY | Smoke the bird

■ Preheat smoker to **275°F**. Remove packaging and giblets; reserve neck/giblets and wing tips for jus, excluding liver. Pat bird dry.

■ Season lightly with pepper/herbs. Because the turkey is pre-brined, skip additional salt unless the label and taste warrant it.

■ Smoke with the bird on a rack and a probe in the thickest breast area, away from bone. Use a second probe/check for thigh. Plan for several hours, but do not use a minutes-per-pound rule as the endpoint.

■ Cook breast to **165°F** and check thigh/leg at least 165°F; for better dark-meat tenderness, aim for roughly **175-185°F** in the thighs if achievable without drying the breast. If needed, remove breast sections once safe and finish legs/thighs separately.

■ Rest about 20 minutes, then proceed promptly to carving and cooling. Keep the total time outside refrigeration within 2 hours.

WEDNESDAY | Make the jus while the bird smokes

■ In a large pot, heat oil over medium-high. Brown neck, non-liver giblets and wing tips with carrots, celery and onions, stirring, about 10 minutes.

■ Pour in **1 1/2 cups wine**; scrape the pot bottom. Add **6 cups unsalted stock**, garlic, sage, thyme and soy sauce. Bring just to a boil, then simmer partly covered **60-120 minutes**.

■ Strain and discard solids. Taste cautiously: pre-brined turkey will add salt later.

■ **Smoked-bird adaptation:** The original finishes the jus by deglazing a roasting pan with the remaining wine. A smoker may have no suitable drippings. Instead, simmer the remaining **3/4 cup wine** separately for several minutes to cook down its sharpness, then add to strained stock; optionally add a modest amount of clean, defatted smoker drippings if available. Simmer 5-10 minutes, taste, and strain again if needed.

■ You should have roughly **4-5 cups**, depending on evaporation. If it reduces too far, add unsalted stock. Reserve enough for Thursday reheating and table service.

WEDNESDAY | Carve, pull and chill

■ Separate the two drumsticks and two thighs at the joints. **Leave whole, bone-in, skin-on.** Place in shallow covered containers, in a single layer if possible.

■ Remove both breast lobes from the carcass; remove breast skin and bones. While still warm, pull breast meat into **medium, substantial shreds** with forks or clean gloved hands. Do not finely mince.

■ Lightly toss pulled breast with approximately **3/4-1 cup jus** to start; add only enough to moisten, not flood. Divide into shallow pans (ideally meat no more than about 2 inches deep).

■ Transfer all meat and jus into the refrigerator **within 2 hours** of leaving safe hot holding. Cool quickly to **40°F or below**; use shallow containers and an ice bath for the jus as needed. Do not leave a deep hot foil pan on the counter to cool.

■ Refrigerate remaining jus separately, covered. Label pans: PULLED BREAST / LEGS & THIGHS / JUS.

THURSDAY | Reheat and serve

■ Preheat oven to **275°F**. Skim solidified fat from cold jus. Heat jus in a saucepan until steaming/hot.

■ **Pulled breast:** Place in a shallow foil pan; add about **1/2-1 cup hot jus**, depending on moisture and quantity. Cover tightly with foil. Reheat, stirring once or twice, until the **center and all portions reach 165°F**. Add more hot jus only if needed.

■ **Whole legs and thighs:** Arrange separately in a shallow pan. Add about **1/2 cup unsalted turkey stock** to pan bottom, without immersing skin. Cover tightly and reheat until thickest portions reach **165°F**.

■ **Time allowance:** approximately **30-60 minutes** for shallow pans, possibly longer for densely packed meat or whole dark pieces. Start early enough to allow thermometer checks.

■ Once heated, transfer to warmed serving dishes. Keep food at **140°F or hotter** if holding before serving; avoid extended holding, which dries meat. Do not rely on a switched-off oven for safe holding.

■ Serve pulled breast with a little jus and remaining **hot jus in a gravy boat**. Serve whole legs/thighs on a separate platter. Keep traditional roast-turkey gravy separate.

THURSDAY | Countdown (fill in your serving time)

When	Action
T - 90 min	Clear oven space; preheat to 275°F. Take chilled pans directly from refrigerator when ready to reheat.
T - 75 min	Heat jus; start covered legs/thighs (whole pieces may take longer).
T - 60 min	Start covered pulled breast; add hot jus.
T - 30 min	Stir breast gently; check both pans with thermometer; adjust timing based on actual temperatures.
T - 15 min	Confirm every portion is at least 165°F; move to safe hot holding if necessary.
T - 5 min	Transfer to platters, add finishing jus, set out gravy boat.
SERVE	Pulled smoked breast + whole smoked legs/thighs + separately roasted turkey.

Troubleshooting and final checks

■ **Too salty?** Dilute reserved jus with unsalted stock. Do not add salt to the pulled meat before tasting together.

■ **Breast looks dry?** Fold in a few tablespoons of hot jus at a time; cover and avoid unnecessary holding.

■ **Jus too thin?** Reduce a portion in a saucepan; do not reduce aggressively if salty.

■ **Skin softened?** Expected after chilling/covered reheating. Optional brief uncovered high-heat finish for dark pieces only, after they reach 165°F, if oven space allows.

■ **Leftovers:** Refrigerate within 2 hours in shallow containers. Use refrigerated leftovers within 3-4 days or freeze. Reheat leftovers to 165°F.

Source note: The original NYT recipe roasts at 325°F, uses pan deglazing, and serves shredded breast with 1-1 1/2 cups jus; the smoking, scaling, pre-brined seasoning adjustments, overnight cooling and Thursday reheating are adaptations for this household plan.