

Brine & Bake Pheasant

1 – 2 to 2.5 lbs MacFarlane Pheasant
2 quarts water
½ cup salt – pickling, sea or Kosher is best
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup honey or maple syrup
1 small onion chopped finely
3-4 cloves garlic chopped finely
1 stalk celery chopped finely
¼ cup lemon juice (or juice from 1 lemon)
1/8 tsp cayenne pepper (optional)
2 T Butter, cold
2 T butter, softened
salt, pepper and paprika to taste

In large sauce pan, heat water until starting to steam and add salt, brown sugar and honey. Turn off heat and stir until dissolved. Allow to cool for ½ hr to 1 hour to room temperature. Then add the onion, garlic, celery, lemon and optional cayenne; mix and add pheasant. Cover and refrigerate at least 12 hrs (overnight is best to make for dinner the following evening). Preheat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Remove pheasant from brine and discard brine. Pat dry with paper towel; place breast side up in roasting pan. Put 1 T butter under skin on each side of breast. Then brush the softened butter over the skin on top. Add salt, pepper and paprika to taste. Roast for 1 ½ hr, basting frequently, then take temperature in thigh and breast. Temperature should read 165 degrees. Once it reaches this temperature, remove from oven and cover in a warm place to rest for 10 minutes to allow reabsorption of juices. Carve and enjoy!

Optional cooking ideas:

Stuff cavity with small whole lemon and ½ onion chopped.

Stuff cavity with fresh sage, parsley and chopped garlic/onion.

Top breast and wrap drumstick with bacon.

Add 'seasonal' spices such as clove, nutmeg or cinnamon to brine and serve with cranberry sauce.