Cocinanding • VISUAL KITCHEN INFOGUIDE • EDITORIALLY VALIDATED

Caribbean | Main Courses

Cuban & Puerto Rican Garlic-Citrus Mojo Roast Turkey (Pavochón)

⏱ Prep: 35m 🔥 Cook: 180m ❄ Rest: 12.5h ∑ Total: 965m 🍽 10 servings



MISE EN PLACE / INGREDIENTS [12]

- [ ] **1 whole** Thawed whole young turkey (12 to 14 lbs), giblets and neck removed (Butterball or Jennie-O)
- [ ] **1 cup** Cuban/Caribbean sour orange marinade (naranja agria), divided (Badia)
- [ ] **2 tbsp** Dried Caribbean or Mexican oregano, crushed between palms (Badia)
- [ ] **2.5 tbsp** Diamond Crystal kosher salt (halve to 1.25 tbsp if turkey is 8% pre-basted) (Diamond Crystal)
- [ ] **1 packet** Sazón with coriander and annatto (for golden mahogany skin color) (Goya)
- [ ] **2 whole** Large yellow onions, quartered (for pan bed and cavity aromatics)
- [ ] **20 cloves** Fresh peeled garlic cloves (about 2 large heads)
- [ ] **0.33 cup** Extra-virgin olive oil (Goya)
- [ ] **2 tsp** Ground cumin (Badia)
- [ ] **2 tsp** Freshly cracked black pepper
- [ ] **6 tbsp** Softened unsalted butter (to emulsify garlic paste under breast skin) (Kerrygold)
- [ ] **4 leaves** Dried bay leaves and halved navel orange (for aromatic steam) (Badia)

🛒 US SUPERMARKET BRAND GUIDE

Sour Orange Marinade (Naranja A… Instacart↗ Amazon↗

Delivers the unmistakable tart-floral Seville orange acidity of Cuban and Puerto Rican lechón without sugary fillers that scorch turkey skin. • 📍 **Hispanic / International aisle (Walmart, Publix, Sedano's, Kroger, H-E-B).**

Coriander & Annatto Seasoning (… Instacart↗ Amazon↗

A single packet tints the butter-garlic rub a burnished Caribbean amber-gold so skin browns evenly without burning. • 📍 **Hispanic spice section (Walmart, Target, Publix, Kroger).**

COOKING SEQUENCE & CHECKPOINTS

1 Mash the Caribbean Garlic-Citrus Mojo — ⏱ 15 min

In a pilón mortar, molcajete, or blender, mash peeled garlic cloves, kosher salt (use half if turkey is 8% pre-basted), oregano, cumin, black pepper, Sazón with achiote, olive oil, and 3/4 cup sour orange marinade into a fragrant paste. Reserve 1/4 cup clean mojo in a small jar for the finishing sauce. Mash half of the remaining garlic paste with softened unsalted butter.

✓ Checkpoint: Thick, aromatic amber garlic-mojo butter and liquid citrus marinade ready.

2 Loosen Skin & 12-Hour Overnight Mojo Brine — ⏱ 12h (720m)

Pat the thawed turkey completely dry with paper towels inside and out. Slide your fingers gently under the skin over both breast lobes and thighs without tearing it. Rub the garlic-mojo butter evenly under the skin directly onto the meat, then rub the remaining mojo inside the cavity and over the skin. Set uncovered on a rack in a roasting pan and refrigerate for 12 hours so the skin air-dries.

✓ Checkpoint: Dry, saffron-tinted skin infused overnight with garlic, oregano, and citrus.

3 Aromatic Citrus Cavity & Pan Setup — ⏱ 15 min

Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C) with rack on the lowest third. Tuck halved orange, 1 quartered onion, and bay leaves loosely inside the turkey cavity (do not pack stuffing tightly) and tie drumsticks together with kitchen twine. Scatter the second quartered onion and pour 1 cup water plus the remaining 1/4 cup sour orange into the bottom of the roasting pan beneath the rack.

✓ Checkpoint: Loosely aromatized cavity, tied legs, and hydrated citrus pan bed to prevent scorching.

4 Two-Stage Crackling Skin Roast — ⏱ 3h (180m)

Roast uncovered at 425°F (220°C) for 30 minutes until the skin blisters golden-amber. Reduce oven temperature to 325°F (165°C) and continue roasting for 2 hours 15 minutes to 2 hours 30 minutes, basting the breast every 45 minutes with pan juices (tent breast loosely with foil only if mahogany color gets too dark), until the thickest breast registers 160°F–162°F and deepest thigh reaches 175°F–185°F.

✓ Checkpoint: Deep mahogany crackling skin and verified digital probe temperatures in breast and thigh.

5 30-Minute Carryover Rest & Warm Mojo Jus — ⏱ 30 min

Transfer the Pavochón to an acacia carving board with juice grooves and rest uncovered for 30 minutes until carryover heat brings the breast safely past ≥165°F (74°C). Skim excess fat from the roasting pan, simmer the caramelized onion-citrus drippings on the stove for 3 minutes with the reserved clean mojo, carve the juicy turkey against the grain, and spoon warm mojo jus alongside.

✓ Checkpoint: Succulent garlic-infused slices with crisp skin and glossy citrus-garlic pan mojo.

FOOD SAFETY & INTERNAL TEMPERATURE: 165°F (74°C) MANDATORY USDA SAFE MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURE IN THICKEST BREAST, INNER THIGH, AND WING JOINT

USDA Poultry & Marinade Safety (≥165°F / 74°C): Never reuse raw turkey marinade without boiling it rolling for at least 3 minutes—reserve clean mojo before raw contact instead. Keep loosely placed cavity aromatics airy (never stuff raw dressing tightly inside the bird), and verify ≥165°F (74°C) final breast temperature after carryover rest.

MASTER DONENESS CHECKPOINT:

Crackling deep mahogany citrus-garlic skin, succulent white breast meat reaching ≥165°F (74°C) after carryover rest, and glossy sour-orange pan drippings.

WHY IT WORKS:

Lechón Flavor Architecture Applied to Poultry: Mashing raw garlic with kosher salt, oregano, cumin, and sour orange forms an aromatic paste (adobo mojado) whose organic acids tenderize muscle proteins overnight without turning turkey mushy.

⚠ TROUBLESHOOTING:

Garlic bits on the outside of the skin darken too fast: Pack 80% of the chunky garlic-butter paste UNDER the loosened breast and thigh skin, and brush only strained liquid mojo and melted butter over the exterior skin; tent loosely with foil if deeply browned before 160°F.

Interactive cooking mode, timers, and video guide at:
https://cocinanding.com/recipes/pavochon-al-mojo-criollo

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