Brine for a Turkey

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For a tastier and juicier turkey this Thanksgiving:
Basic Brine
2 cups kosher salt
2 cups sugar
2 gallons of water (orange juice or apple cider can be substituted for some water)
Optional ingredients for flavor:
3 bay leaves
1/2 cup of your favorite dried herbs and spices (sage, oregano, thyme, basil, cloves, cinnamon, etc.)
1 tablespoon cracked black peppercorns
lemon or orange slices
crushed garlic cloves
First In a large stockpot over medium-high heat, combine 1 gallon of water, salt, sugar and optional flavor ingredients. Stir until sugar and salt have dissolved, but do not boil. Remove pot from heat and let cool for 15 minutes.
Next Spread a layer of ice into the bottom of a cooler that is a little larger than the turkey. Set the brining bag inside cooler of ice and place turkey, breast side down, inside bag. Pour cooled brine over turkey, plus an additional 1 gallon of water or juice. To further cool brine, add 2 scoops of ice into brine bag. Seal bag, making sure to let out as much air as possible. Add additional ice to cooler so that your turkey stays at 40 degrees Fahrenheit while brining. Brine for one hour per pound of turkey. Do not over brine, or turkey will be salty.
Last Remove turkey from brine, scooping some of the herbs and spices from brine solution and spreading onto the skin of the turkey for extra flavor. Brush turkey with vegetable oil or melted butter and cook as desired (roasting or smoking) until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F. Discard brine and use an antibacterial cleaner to clean area exposed to raw poultry.
I do not recommend stuffing a turkey -- brined or not -- because in order for the stuffing to reach a safe temperature of 160 degrees F, the turkey itself will be overcooked. You can store a brined turkey in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours before cooking. Store turkey on a V rack set inside a roasting pan, uncovered.
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