

THANKSGIVING

MENU PLANNER

Recipes, grocery list and
the life-saving planning
guide

Serves 12



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Training for the Perfect Gravy

Aside from the turkey, the gravy is the second most important part of the Thanksgiving menu. A good gravy combines all of the cooking aromas of the turkey and will be the perfect touch to your Thanksgiving turkey.

Making the gravy is a little bit of an art and finding the right consistency does take a little bit of experience and a few good tools.

You will need a large glass measuring cup, a metal spoon, a saucepan (unless you like to use the roasting pan). You will also need a small bowl, cornstarch or sweet rice flour, broth (perhaps wine) and salt and freshly ground pepper.

- Assemble the tools you will need.
- Remove the turkey completely from the pan.
- Pour the drippings into a large glass-measuring cup; scrape up the brown bits too.
- Let liquid stand (or place in the fridge) and let the fat rise to the top.
- Collect the fat by either tipping the cup and using a metal spoon to remove the clear fat or skim off the fat if you put it in the refrigerator.
- In your saucepan or roasting pan, pour a little bit of the fat (about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup), toss the rest. If you don't have enough skimmed fat, add butter or buttery spread.
- Follow our recipe, then cook and stir the mixture over medium heat until the blend is thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir adding salt and pepper to taste. If the mixture is too thick or too thin, add more broth or more thickener until you reach the desired consistency—this is where art and lots of practice play a role.

Thawing a Frozen Turkey

If you are using a frozen turkey, it's extremely important that you follow guidelines for thawing your turkey. Although a whole turkey purchased frozen may safely be thawed in the refrigerator or in cold water, thawing it in the refrigerator is recommended.

Keep the turkey wrapped and place it in a pan; let stand about 24 hours for each 5 pounds of turkey. Let large turkeys stand a maximum of 5 days in the refrigerator. Don't let any turkey juices contaminate the refrigerator. The giblets and neck are customarily packed in the neck and body cavities of frozen turkeys. They may be removed from the cavities near the end of the thawing period to expedite complete thawing of the bird. If desired, the giblets and neck may be refrigerated and reserved for use in the gravy.

To thaw turkey in the refrigerator:

Keep the turkey wrapped and place it in a pan; let stand about 24 hours for each 5 pounds of turkey. Let large turkeys stand a maximum of 5 days in the refrigerator. The giblets and neck are customarily packed in the neck and body cavities of frozen turkeys. They may be removed from the cavities near the end of the thawing period to expedite complete thawing of the bird. If desired, the giblets and neck may be refrigerated and reserved for use in the gravy.

To thaw turkey in cold water:

Make certain that the turkey is in the original packaging. This prevents bacteria in the surrounding environment from being introduced into the food and any turkey juices from contaminating the refrigerator, and it prevents the poultry tissues from absorbing water, resulting in a watery product. Change the cold water every 30 minutes. Approximately 30 minutes per pound of turkey are required for thawing. After thawing in cold water, the turkey should be cooked immediately.

Don't Wine, BRINE!

Holiday magazines are filled with tips on how to prepare a perfect turkey, from wrapping the turkey in cheesecloth, tossing it in a cooking bag, rubbing it with a special concoction and even hanging it from the trailer hitch while driving 50 mph (ok that's an exaggeration). But, the truth be told, a simple old-fashioned brine gets the most unbelievable results.

Brining, much like baking, is a scientific process. In a nutshell, the salt solution unwinds meat proteins to form a hollow tube. The brine solution travels into the protein, carrying the flavors of the herbs and other ingredients. The solution becomes trapped inside -- creating a delicious, juicy turkey that is hard to beat.

The base of a brine is salt, sugar and water. With the brine we use here, you should brine your turkey at least 10-24 hours. Create your own brine flavor by adding a variety of dried herbs, citrus slices, crushed garlic cloves or any of your favorite aromatic ingredients. Some of the water can easily be substituted with orange juice or apple cider and you can replace some of the sugar with other sweeteners, such as maple syrup or brown sugar.

The main logistical problem with brining is figuring out in what container to use. You can use a clean bucket, a brining bag, a tub or a cooler. Brining bags from Williams Sonoma (the best brining bags) hold up to a 22-pound turkey and can be easily placed inside a cooler or in the fridge. Since brining does not preserve meat, the turkey and brine must be kept refrigerated at all times.

Some turkey wizards complain that brining makes the turkey and the gravy too salty. Choose a brine with salt and sugar and rinse the turkey well before working. Do not salt the turkey before roasting in case too much salt seeps in, same for your gravy.

There are many prepared brines you can purchase which is convenient but our recommendation is a combination of herbs, salt and sugar.

Carving the Perfect Bird

You've bought it, stuffed it, cooked it, and now you have to carve it. If you're daunted by the task—some of the best cooks are—just remember that carving a turkey comes down to simple technique. Follow the easy steps:



To prepare for carving, have the following equipment ready:

Warm serving platter

Flexible and sharp 10-inch slicing knife (a serrated blade will tear the meat)

Carving fork for arranging and serving the meat

Let the turkey stand (covered) for 20-30 minutes after taking it out of the oven. This allows the juices to settle.

Cut through the skin that connects the breast and the drumstick. Slice down until you reach the joint. Using a paper towel, grab the leg and push down, separating the leg and thigh from the bird. Use your chef's knife to slice through the joint.

Separate the thigh and drumstick by cutting through the joint with your knife. If you'd like, you can carve the dark meat off the drumstick by holding the smallest side at a 45-degree angle to your cutting board and slicing through meat in a downwards direction, parallel to the bone. Slice the thigh meat from the bone (the dark meat should be tender from resting in the juices).

Remove the wings, using the same method and slice with your knife downwards to separate the wings from the breast and pull the wings out as you cut through the joint.

1. Remove each breast. Find the breastbone. Position a long, flexible knife (or a boning knife or electric knife) on one side of it, and slice downward, as close to the bone as

possible. As you slice, use your other hand to pull the meat away from the breastbone, until you've cut the breast off the carcass in one piece. Transfer to the cutting board. Carve the breasts on a separate cutting board. Slice across the grain for the tenderest meat as slicing with the grain may result in a chewy texture.

2. Slice the thigh meat. Work on the cutting board. Holding the thighbone with tongs or a paper towel, remove the meat from the bone with the edge of the chef's knife. Transfer meat to platter.

If you're more visual, check out this great video:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_YCuhBOibM

The Perfect Thanksgiving Wines



With Thanksgiving quickly approaching, there is no better time to start planning your Thanksgiving dinner menu and selecting wines to complement the feast. Historically, the week before Thanksgiving is a great time to buy wine as many stores run specials on holiday wines. The big question - which wines to go with the variety of tastes, textures and aromas that uniquely present themselves on Thanksgiving Day?

From appetizers, to white and dark turkey meat, mashed potatoes, yams, herb-filled stuffing, cranberry sauce, spicy this and salty that ... all the way to pumpkin or pecan pie – is there truly a single wine that can take you seamlessly from start to finish.

The art of pairing wines with food is largely a matter of personal preference; however, some safe bets for Thanksgiving wines are Pinot Noir, Zinfandel or Beaujolais for red wine lovers and Sauvignon Blanc, Gewurztraminer and Pinot Grigio for those who prefer white wines. With white wines the pairing priority is finding a wine with well-balanced acidity, with reds you are shooting for fairly tame tannins that will yield to and support the flavors of the food.

The most important consideration is the wine's taste, how it complements what you're serving, and what you like. There are no hard-and-fast rules for picking the right red or white wine. Whether you favor whites or reds, lighter, livelier, less complex wines go better with the traditional Thanksgiving feast than heavier, more complicated ones.

These are popular Thanksgiving wine selections:

Gewurztraminer: This white wine tends to have the aromatic gusto and spicy palate appeal that give it a solid standing with turkey and gravy, bringing out the best in both. Gewurztraminer offers a delicious white wine option for Thanksgiving day.

Sauvignon Blanc: This crisp white wine is known for its citrus-based flavors that can be surrounded by herb or mineral undertones, making it a prime pairing candidate for turkey and mashed potatoes.

Pinot Grigio: Capable of handling garlic and onions, herbs and rich, flavorful, high-fat dishes, this white wine is a natural for the demands of Thanksgiving day.

Pinot Noir: This red wine is a traditional favorite for Thanksgiving. Pinot Noir's subtle earthy undertones and often mushroom inspired flavors surround the fruit features of the wine and tend to show well with the traditional flavors of turkey and stuffing.

Zinfandel: This fuller bodied red wine that raises the intensity from a Pinot Noir, but still maintains a balancing effect on many traditional Thanksgiving side dishes. This would be a great wine pick for those looking for a heartier red wine with the capacity to accommodate spice, bitter and sweet flavor profiles. A special note, make sure you choose Zinfandels with lower alcohol contents, many are creeping up to 16% and you know what that would mean; It could be lights out for Aunt Alice.

Beaujolais: Light and dry with fresh, fruity flavors. Because they don't have a lot of tannins, they are very refreshing and easy to drink. Choose more recent vintages and serve it slightly chilled.

What's Hot?

Using a Meat Thermometer



The single most important kitchen tool on Thanksgiving Day is the meat thermometer. Nothing flashy or snazzy is required but you need a thermometer that works.

There are many different types of thermometers from the traditional, instant read, laser, disposable and the digital probe.

Traditional: These models are cheap, easy to use, and battery-free. Their drawback is that they are slow to give a reading, needing up to 10 seconds (which often feels longer for a cook at a hot oven).

Instant-Read: The choice of many chefs, these models produces a reading in a few seconds. They have analog or digital displays. Many versions can be calibrated with the press of a button.

Laser: These are essentially traditional or instant-read thermometers with an added bonus: a laser. The infrared beam reads only surface temperatures, but this is a useful feature for cooks testing hot oil or chocolate, or griddles and grills.

Disposable: When inserted, these strips change color if the meat has reached the strip's preset temperature. They are sold in bulk and thrown away after use, reducing the risk of cross-contamination. But the presets, matched to USDA guidelines, don't give cooks much leeway, and the short probes aren't ideal for large or thick cuts.

Digital Probe: Among other features, these timer look-alikes usually include an alarm that sounds when food reaches the temperature the cook punches in. The probe stays in the meat; a cable connects it to the main unit outside, letting cooks monitor without opening the oven. Some cooks love the programmable features; others find them difficult to navigate, always look

for one that isn't too tech savvy. This is one area need simple function. The Digital Probe thermometer is our top pick because of the ease of use and functionality. You can buy a good one for under \$20 at Target and other discount stores.

Tip of the day: To test the accuracy of your instant read thermometer, insert the tip about 2 inches deep into boiling water. At sea level it should register 212 degrees F. At altitude (Denver for example; it should register 202 degrees F. If it does not, replace it; or if it has a calibration device, reset it for accuracy.

Relish! Thanksgiving Planner

Recipes, grocery list and planning guide

[A] Brined Turkey with Sage Butter

[B] Mushroom Sourdough Stuffing

[C] Buttermilk Mashed Potatoes

[D] Sweet Potato Casserole with Marshmallows

[E] Dinner Rolls

[F] Cranberry Orange Relish

[G] Bacon Green Beans with Goat Cheese

[H] Pumpkin Cream Pie

The Plan

2-3 Days Ahead

Clean out the refrigerator and make room for all of the food

Select and purchase wines

Thaw the turkey in the refrigerator if using a frozen turkey

Wash china and stemware

Polish silver and press linens

Purchase flowers for centerpieces

1 Day Ahead

Make the pies

Assemble the stuffing, cover and refrigerate

Make cranberry sauce

Set the table

Sharpen knives

Chill wine

Gather serving dishes (preferably microwave-safe)

- Bowl for cranberry sauce
- Bowl for stuffing
- Bowl for green beans
- Bowl for sweet potatoes
- Platter for turkey
- Gravy boat
- Bowl or basket lined with cloth napkin for dinner rolls

4 Hours Ahead

Prep and start the turkey, make sage butter

Wrap rolls in foil

Put butter in dish

Fill pitcher with water and lemon slices

Uncork wine, keep white chilled

Start beans through step #1

Peel potatoes and place in pot of water

Make sweet potatoes

45-30 Minutes Ahead

Make the mashed potatoes, place in microwave-safe bowl for quick heat up

Prepare and start the green beans 30 minutes before dinner

When the turkey is done, let rest 30 minutes

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and put stuffing and sweet potatoes in

During the last 15 minutes, place rolls in the oven.

Make the gravy

NOTE: The challenge of any Thanksgiving dinner is to have everything ready and hot at the same time and if you are working with one oven this is more challenging. Place everything in serving dishes that are microwave-safe so you can do a quick re-heat, if needed, before serving.

[A] Brined Turkey with Sage Butter

Prep time: 30 minutes Cook time: See chart

Brine and Turkey

1 cup kosher salt

1 turkey (12 to 18 lbs.) *See cooking chart

Sage Garlic Butter

1 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ cup chopped fresh sage leaves

2 tablespoons chopped garlic

Easy Gravy

Prep and cook time: 10 minutes

½ cup white wine

2 ½ cups chicken broth

3 tablespoons butter, melted

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1. Make brine: Boil 1 qt. water with salt in a pot big enough to hold turkey, stirring until salt is dissolved. Add 2 qts. cold water and let cool to room temperature. Meanwhile, remove leg truss from turkey and discard. Remove neck, tail, and giblets and save for broth if you like. Lower turkey into brine. If breast isn't submerged, make more brine, cool, and add. Chill, covered, at least 12 hours.

2. Make butter: In a food processor, whirl butter, sage, and garlic until smooth.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees

3. Lift turkey from brine, rinse well, and pat dry. Set turkey on a V-shaped rack in a 12-by 17-in. roasting pan (big enough so turkey fits inside rim).
4. Slide your fingers between skin and flesh of bird, turning bird to make pockets of space on the breast, back, and leg areas. Still using your fingers, slide about 1 tbsp. sage butter at a time under skin in all the pockets. Place bird, breast up, on rack.
5. Roast turkey, basting occasionally with pan drippings, until a meat thermometer inserted straight down through thickest part of breast to the bone registers 160°, 2 to 3 hours. Transfer turkey to a platter and tent with foil. Let rest in a warm place 15 to 30 minutes, then carve. (please see cooking chart).
6. Meanwhile, make gravy: Pour drippings into a clear measuring cup, using a flat spatula to scrape off browned bits stuck to pan. Skim fat from drippings (or use a fat separator or place in the fridge for about 5 minutes) and measure out 1/2 cup. Place roasting pan over two burners over medium heat. When hot, deglaze pan with wine, stirring to scrape up bits on bottom of pan. Cook until wine is reduced by half. Whisk in drippings and chicken broth; bring to a boil. Mix butter and flour together in a small bowl until smooth. Drop into boiling liquid, whisking until smooth. Boil for 5 minutes, strain, and serve hot.

You can use any size turkey, use the chart below.

TURKEY COOKING CHART

Heat oven to 350 Degrees F.

Weight	Roasting time (unstuffed)
8-12 lbs	2¾-3 hours
12-14 lbs	3- 3¾ hours
14-18 lbs	3¾ -4¼ hours
18-20 lbs	4¼ -4½ hours
20-24 lbs	4½ -5 hours

Every oven is different; meat should be 165 degrees when inserted in the largest section of the thigh.

[B] Mushroom Sourdough Stuffing

Prep time: 30 minutes Cook time: 40 minutes

- 2 ¼ pounds sourdough bread
- 1 ½ sticks of butter
- 1 pound cremini mushrooms, sliced 1/2-inch thick in both directions
- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper
- 4 stalks celery with leaves, halved lengthwise and sliced
- 1 white onion, chopped
- 10 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves stripped from the stems
- 10 to 12 fresh sage leaves, chopped
- 5 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ cup chopped Italian parsley leaves

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease a 2-quart baking dish and set aside.
2. Cut or tear the bread into 1-inch cubes and spread it evenly on 2 baking sheets. Toast the bread in the oven until completely dry and beginning to crisp and brown, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a large mixing bowl.
3. Melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms and a few pinches of salt and saute, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 6 to 8 minutes. Add celery, onion, 2 tablespoons butter, and thyme. Once the butter has melted, cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables have softened, about 5 minutes. Add sage and remaining 4 tablespoons butter. Add chicken broth to skillet and stir to combine. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
4. Transfer toasted bread cubes to a large bowl. Pour the chicken broth mixture over the bread cubes and toss to combine until the bread cubes absorb the liquid. Pour the mixture into the greased baking dish, and sprinkle with parsley. Bake in the center of the oven until heated through and the top is golden brown, about 40 minutes. Make sure to check, if it's getting to dry, add chicken broth by the ¼ cupful until moistened. It's personal preference if you like your stuffing crispy or not.

[C] Buttermilk Mashed Potatoes

Prep and cook time: 30 minutes

- 4 ½ pounds new potatoes peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 6 tablespoons butter, cut into small pieces

1. Place potatoes in a large saucepan; add enough cold water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil; add 1 tablespoon salt, and cook until potatoes are very tender when pierced with the tip of a paring knife, 20 to 25 minutes.

2. Drain; place in a large bowl. Mash with a potato masher, then add buttermilk and butter. Season with salt and pepper. Mash until smooth and combined and pour into a serving dish.

[D] Sweet Potato Casserole with Marshmallows

Serves 12

Preparation time: 5 minutes Baking time: 20 minutes

- 6 large sweet potatoes, cooked, mashed
- 1½ cups crushed pineapple, drained
- 1½ cups maple syrup
- 1½ teaspoons coarse, or to taste
- 1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon ground allspice
- ¾ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3 cups miniature marshmallows

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

1. In a greased 9x13-inch baking dish, combine sweet potatoes, pineapple, maple syrup, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. (You can refrigerate the dish at this point a day ahead.)
2. Bake until heated through, about 20 to 30 minutes. Top with marshmallows and return to oven. Bake just until marshmallows are lightly browned. Serve immediately.

[F] Cranberry Orange Relish

Prep time: 10 minutes

- 2 oranges
- 2 12 ounce packages fresh cranberries
- 1½ -2 cups sugar

1. Slice unpeeled oranges into eighths and remove seeds. Place half of the cranberries and half of the orange slices in a food processor. Process until mixture is evenly chopped. Transfer to a bowl. Repeat with remaining cranberries and orange slices.

2. Stir in sugar to desired sweetness. Store in refrigerator until ready to serve.

Note: You may want to work in smaller batches depending on the size of your food processor.

[G] Bacon Green Beans with Goat Cheese

Prep and cook time: 30 minutes

- 1 pound of bacon, diced
- 1 white onion, minced
- 2½ pounds green beans, trimmed
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, more to taste
- coarse salt
- 1¾ cups boiling water
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- Freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup goat cheese, crumbled

1. In a large deep stockpot or Dutch oven, cook the bacon over medium heat, stirring, until golden. Transfer the bacon with a slotted spoon to a paper towel-lined plate. Remove all but 4 tablespoons of bacon drippings. Add the onion to the skillet and cook, stirring, until softened.
2. Add the beans, red pepper flakes and salt and sauté over medium high heat, stirring, for 2 minutes.
3. Add the boiling water and cover the skillet immediately (being careful not to splatter the grease). Steam the beans, shaking the stockpot occasionally, for 15 minutes, or until just tender. Add the butter, vinegar and pepper and toss until combined. Using a slotted spoon, transfer beans to a serving dish and sprinkle with the bacon crumbles and goat cheese to serve.

[H] Pumpkin Cream Pie

Prep time: 15 minutes Cook time: 50-60 minutes

- cooking spray
- 2 Pillsbury unroll-fill refrigerated piecrusts
- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 15-ounce cans pumpkin puree
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 6 large eggs

For Brown Sugar Whipped Cream:

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups heavy whipping cream
- 4 tablespoons brown sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and arrange a rack in the bottom third of the oven.

1. Spray 2 9-inch-diameter glass pie dishes with nonstick spray. Unroll pie crusts. Line dishes with crust and crimp edges decoratively.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the cream cheese, pumpkin, whipping cream, brown sugar and pumpkin pie spice. Using electric hand mixer, add the eggs, 1 at a time incorporating completely between each addition.
3. Pour the filling into the pie shells and bake on a sheet tray until the filling is mostly set and the crust has browned, about 50 to 60 minutes. The center will still look slightly loose. Remove from the oven and cool to room temperature.

Grocery List

Each recipe and side is coded with an A, B, C, etc. that corresponds to the shopping list. If you're unable to make a particular dinner, simply cross off everything on the grocery list with that code.

What you need but may already have

All-purpose flour
Crushed red pepper flakes
Ground allspice
Ground cinnamon
Ground nutmeg
Kosher salt
Pumpkin pie spice
Sugar
White vinegar

Meat, Fish, Poultry

1 12-16 pound turkey [A]
1 pound bacon [G]

Dairy/Cheese

2 packages unsalted butter [all]
1 cup buttermilk [C]
4 ounces goat cheese, crumbled [G]
8 ounces of cream cheese [H]
20 ounces heavy whipping cream [H]
6 large eggs [H]
2 Pillsbury unroll-fill refrigerated piecrusts [H]

Canned Goods/ Sauce

3 cartons chicken broth [A, B] (need 50 ounces)
1 large can of crushed pineapple [D]
1 ½ cups maple syrup [D]
2 15-ounce cans of pumpkin puree [H]
1 cup brown sugar [H]

Produce

1 head garlic [A]
1 package fresh sage [A]
1 package fresh thyme [B]
1 pound cremini mushrooms [B]
1 head celery [B]
2 white onions [B,G]
2 pounds green beans [G]
1 bunch Italian parsley [B]
4-5 pounds new potatoes [C]
6 large sweet potatoes [D]
2 oranges [F]
2 12-ounce packages of fresh cranberries [F]
1 lemon (for water)

Nuts/Dried Fruit/Marshmallows

3 cups mini marshmallows [D]

Bread

1 ½ pounds fresh sourdough bread [B]
12-15 dinner rolls [E]

Freezer

2 refrigerated pie crusts [H]

Spirits/Wine

½ cup white wine

Serving Dishes and Misc Needed

Tub or cooler to brine turkey

Serving dish for mashed potatoes

9x13 baking dish (sweet potatoes)

Large baking dishes (stuffing)

Serving dish for green beans

Small dish for cranberry sauce

Gravy boat

Basket for rolls

Pitcher for water