

Traditional Turkey Thanksgiving Dinner Overview



Work backwards from that time and give yourself time for preparation. You will need up to 5 hours for preparation for all portions of the meal including the turkey cooking time.

You should cook a large bird (over 12-15 lb.). Don't stuff the turkey and you only need about 15 minutes per pound of cooking time. I wrap the tips of the legs and wings in foil and lay a piece of foil over the breast. Use a meat thermometer and insert it into the inner thigh muscle about 2/3 of the way through the cooking cycle. The turkey is done when it reaches 185° internal temperature in the thigh. During the final hour of cooking remove the foil covering the bird and let it brown. The turkey will carve best if it has a chance to rest outside the oven for at least 1/2 hour.

Once cooked, mashed potatoes and cooked roasted sweet potatoes will hold in a warm oven for 1/2 hour to 45 minutes until you lay out the complete dinner.

1. Determine what time you wish to dine.
2. About 6 hours before you wish to dine, prepare turkey. (I usually don't stuff the bird and make the dressing in casserole dishes. You'll need less time to cook the bird if it's not stuffed.)
3. Determine how long it needs to cook. For example: a 15 lb. bird needs to cook 15 minutes per pound. Add one-half hour for your turkey to rest following cooking. Now you know that you'll need 5-1/2 hours to cook the bird and let it rest. If you're eating at 4 PM, you'll need to start cooking the turkey at 11:30 AM.
4. About 2 hours before you wish to dine peel potatoes. Cover potatoes in cold water and set aside.
5. Also prepare sweet potatoes and Brussels Sprouts.
6. Start boiling potatoes about 1 hour before dining. Pour off cold water and use about 2 C. lightly salted water for cooking. Reserve leftover cooking water and mash potatoes while they're warm. Place in warming oven or on back of range to keep warm.
7. You're now about 35 minutes from dining. Put sweet potatoes and Brussels Sprouts in the oven and rewarm dressing now.
8. Add cranberries and pecans to Brussels Sprouts during the final 5 minutes of cooking.
9. Rewarm dressing while Brussels Sprouts cook.
10. Make turkey gravy after turkey comes out of the oven.
11. Place cranberry sauce in a serving dish/Warm optional rolls/optional relish trays.
12. Carve turkey and Serve.