

Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner

Here we are! It's that special holiday devoted to celebrating the harvest.

Many people today celebrate this feast by dividing up the cooking duties. Splitting up the essential elements of the Thanksgiving dinner will make final dinner preparations simpler, so feel free to assign different participants portions of the meal: Sweet Potatoes, Mashed Potatoes and extras like cranberries, rolls, relish trays and desserts are good to suggest to others. The recipes below include items for the full meal. (Remember, you made the dressing last night so you only need to rewarm it today.)

Often, in my family, there are guests who feel most comfortable working on the clean-up crew after dinner. It's good to get kitchen clean-up organized as well.

Preparation time: 5-6 hours - Serves: 6

Prep the Ingredients

Notes on Organizing

Prep and organize ingredients so they're easy to add when needed. Prep a total of 6 cloves of garlic: 2 chopped cloves for the turkey and 4 whole/peeled cloves for the Mashed Potatoes. Keep prepped potatoes, yams and sprouts immersed in separate containers of cold water until ready to cook. You can prep each dish shortly before it appears in the timeline.

Roasted Turkey *(4-1/2 hours before)*

Salt and pepper
2 cloves garlic (smashed and chopped)
1 C. onions (coarsely-chopped)

Yams *(1 hour before)*

1 tsp. butter
1 tart apple (cored/coarsely-chopped)
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
3-4 yams (peeled/cut into 2" pieces/set aside in cold water)
1/2 tsp. salt
1 T. packed brown sugar
1/4 C. low-sodium vegetable broth

Turkey Gravy

All liquid from cooking turkey (fat removed)
2-4 C. vegetable or chicken broth (as needed)
1 bay leaf

1/2 C. flour
mixed and shaken with
1 C. nonfat milk

1T. butter
1-1/2 C. reserved potato cooking water

Mashed Potatoes *(1 hour before)*

3 lbs. (10-12) russet potatoes (peeled/cut into 2" pieces/cover in cold water)
2 C. water
4 whole cloves garlic (peeled)
1/2 tsp. salt
2 T. butter
1/3 C. nonfat milk

Brussels Sprouts *(40 min. before)*

Brussels sprouts (washed/halved/kept in cold water)
1 T. olive oil
pinch of salt
1/3 C. dried cranberries
1/2 C. roasted pecan pieces
1/4 C. low-sodium vegetable broth
1/2 tsp. honey
2 tsp. lemon juice

Cranberries/Optional Relish Tray/Rolls

two 15 oz. cans cranberries (whole berries or jelly)

Optional:
whole-grain rolls

Relish plate

Let's Prepare, Cook, and Plate This!

Basic Assembly Instructions

Start the turkey earlier in the day after you've calculated the cooking time. Plan to cook unstuffed turkey 15 minutes per pound. Continue with other items as instructed.

4-1/2 hours before you wish to dine - **Roasted Turkey**

1. Preheat the oven to 500° with the empty roasting pan (including roasting rack) in the oven.
 2. While the oven heats, rub the turkey on all sides with salt, pepper and chopped garlic. Wrap the wings and ends of the drumsticks in foil and lay a piece of foil over the breast portion.
 3. Carefully remove the hot roaster pan and place the turkey on the roasting rack. Sprinkle sliced onions over the turkey, place cover on the roaster. Slide turkey into the oven.
 4. Reduce temperature setting to 325° and cook the turkey 15 minutes per pound. About 2/3 of the way through the cooking, insert a meat thermometer into the thick portion of the thigh. When it reads 185°, remove the foil from the breast and the lid from the roaster and cook a bit more until the turkey is brown.
 5. Remove browned turkey from the oven. Lift turkey out of the liquid in pan and place on a rimmed cookie sheet. Make a foil tent around the bird. Let it rest for at least 30 minutes before carving.
 6. Let the liquid remain in the roasting pan until you're ready to make gravy.
- * Reset the oven for 375° for yams and Brussels Sprouts.

Mashed Potatoes/Yams

1 hour before you wish to dine

1. Cook Potatoes: Pour cold water off of prepped potatoes. Pour 2 C. fresh water over the potatoes, add garlic and sprinkle with salt. Boil potatoes 20 minutes or until tender. (While potatoes cook assemble yams.)
2. Assemble and cook yams: Melt 1 tsp. butter and use it to oil a 9X9 baking dish. Arrange cored and sliced apples over bottom of pan. Sprinkle apples with cinnamon. Layer yam pieces over apples. Sprinkle with salt and brown sugar. Pour broth over all ingredients.
3. Mash Potatoes: Remove cooked potatoes from heat and pour remaining liquid into a measuring bowl. The reserved potato cooking water will be used for making gravy.
4. Mash potatoes and garlic with butter in cooking pan or a large bowl. Add milk and whip well. Cover and set in warming oven.

40 minutes before dining

Brussels Sprouts/Rewarm Dressing

1. Drain and place halved Brussels Sprouts flat-side-down on an oiled baking tray. Drizzle sprouts with oil and sprinkle with salt. Place the tray in the 375° oven and set timer for 15 minutes.
2. Rewarm Dressing Pour 1/4 C. water over each pan of cooked dressing, re-cover and place in oven with Brussels Sprouts. Remove dressing when sprouts are finished cooking.
3. Turn sprouts after 15 minutes and reset the timer for 5 minutes.
4. When the timer sounds, sprinkle sprouts with dried cranberries and pecans and pour mixture of broth, honey and lemon juice over sprouts. Set the timer for 5 more minutes.

While Sprouts Cook and Dressing is Warming - Turkey Gravy

1. Use a Fat Separator, pour drippings from the roaster pan into separator pitcher. When the fat rises to the top of the separator pitcher, carefully pour off and discard the fat, saving the rich cooking broth. Pour the broth into a medium-sized bowl. Keep refilling the Fat Separator until you've emptied all drippings from the bottom of the roaster.
2. Pour the separated broth and an additional 2-4 C. commercial chicken, turkey or vegetable broth into pan. When you serve the meal, you'll want about 1 C. of gravy per diner. (If you have 6 diners and 4 C. of separated broth from the turkey drippings, add another 2 C. of commercial broth before continuing.)
3. Add a bay leaf to the broth and bring to a boil.
4. Thicken with flour roux. Once thickened, cook at least 10 minutes over low heat, stirring often.
5. Stir in 1 T. butter.
6. Thin gravy to desired final serving consistency with reserved potato water.

Cranberries/Rolls/Relish Trays/Serve

Spoon canned cranberries of choice into a serving bowl and chop with a spoon.

If you're serving rolls with the meal, this would be the time to warm them.

If you do relish trays, put them together now.

Serve: Carve the turkey and place on a large, warmed platter. Transfer all other hot items to warmed serving bowls and call diners to the table. It's time to celebrate.

* Now is when you're really glad you have that kitchen clean up crew organized!

Leftover Turkey and Turkey Carcass

Now that dinner is over, address the leftover turkey. Pick the bones clean and store the dark and light meat in separate containers in the fridge. You'll use the meat in coming days.

Break up the carcass and place bones and skin in a deep soup kettle. Cover with a couple quarts of water and bring to a boil. Cook 2 hours over low heat. Cool enough to handle. Remove and discard bones and skin. Store broth in quart jars in the fridge. You'll be using the broth on Sunday.

Let us know what you think and ask questions you may have. chezdon@plate6.com