

Everyday Healthy! Everyday Delicious!

From the Kitchen of Janice Feuer Haugen

Thanksgiving Guide & Checklist

A Week or Two Before Thanksgiving

- Finalize your guest list
- Plan your menu balancing flavors, textures and colors.
- Select and gather all of your recipes
- Note any special equipment, pans or tools you will need/want.
- Determine what you can borrow and what you will need to buy and do so.
- Divvy out specific dishes or courses to those coming who would like to bring something.
- As oven space is usually at a premium include dishes that cook on top of the stove as well as in the oven.
- Use the **Shopping List Template** to create your shopping list so you can account for every ingredient and avoid last-minute trips to the store.
 - Print out a few copies of this Shopping List so you will have a blank copy to use for all your more complex meals throughout the year.
 - List everything you will need for each recipe along with the amount of each ingredient required for each recipe.
 - Total up the amounts for each ingredient.
 - Check your pantry staples. If they're not fresh or you're running low, add them to the shopping list.
 - Note where you will buy each item. Then use a highlighter to differentiate stores.

- platters
- serving utensils
- tables
- chairs
- tablecloth, placemats, place cards, table runner, table pad
- napkins
- flatware
- dishes
- glasses
- pots & pans
- decorations, flowers

The week before Thanksgiving

Do a few things throughout the week that can be done in advance

- Purchase a frozen turkey, if that's your best option (though I prefer fresh). If you buy a frozen turkey, allow it to defrost gradually in the refrigerator where the turkey will need 1 day

for each 4 pounds of turkey. A 12 pound turkey will require three full days to defrost.

- Some people consider either a wet or dry brined turkey to be moister and more flavorful. If you do brine your turkey, be sure the turkey is defrosted when you begin.

- Make the turkey stock. It will keep refrigerated for 3-4 days, or frozen for up to 3 months.
- Prepare the cranberry sauce and store in the refrigerator.
- Prepare the pie crust(s)
 - Roll out the dough and place the crust(s), wrapped in plastic wrap, in either the freezer or fridge until you are ready to bake them Thursday a.m.
- Wash glassware, if necessary
- Polish any silverware or silver platters you will be using.
- Decide on what you are going to wear and try it on. Wash, iron or have it dry cleaned and ready to wear so there are no surprises Thanksgiving Day.

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- ***The weekend before Thanksgiving***

- Purchase a fresh turkey
- Do the rest of your food buying this weekend.
- Early morning Monday or Tuesday are also good times to shop.
- Check with everyone that's bringing something to be sure all is well.
- Cut up or tear your bread for stuffing and let it sit out unwrapped to dry out.
- ***Create a timeline for Thursday. Timing is everything on Thanksgiving Day. Be sure to put this timeline in writing. You will be so happy not to have to figure this all out on Thursday. Be sure to include:***
 - ***what you can bake before the turkey goes into the oven***
 - ***what you will do while the turkey is cooking***
 - ***what you will do while the turkey is resting***
 - *List each of the items you will be serving from hors d'oeuvres to dessert and*
 - *the time that each dish will need to be put into what temperature oven.*
 - *Record what time to heat up the water on the stove (i.e. for cooking potatoes for mashing, or cooking green beans).*

- *Especially include the actual time the turkey needs to come out of the refrigerator, the time it needs to go into a preheated oven in order to be cooked, rested, carved, plated and served at the time you want to eat.*
- *Be realistic. What time do you need to begin on Thursday morning so that you have time to get everything done and yet still have a few minutes to take a walk, relax, clean up and get dressed before your guests arrive. (Wouldn't that be nice?)*

- **Monday**

- Leave your turkey whole or cut it into its parts (for [Braised Turkey](#)) and either salt ([dry brine](#)) or [brine](#) it according to your recipe.
- If you haven't done so already, prepare the [turkey stock](#) after you have cut up your turkey (or with the neck, giblets and additional purchased turkey wings). When you make the stock in advance you'll have time to refrigerate it so that it is very easy to skim off any fat that rises to the top. Make a place in your refrigerator to keep it cold.

- **Tuesday**

- Prep all of the vegetables you will need for the turkey and stuffing and any other dishes you are serving. Package and label everything with the amount and for which recipe.
- Prepare your stuffing and put it into oven-proof dishes for baking on Thursday. Cover and refrigerate.
- If you have room in your kitchen, bring in an extra table for extra storage and/or work space.
- Take out the serving platters, bowls and dishes you will use for each menu item and decide how and where you will display the food.
 - Label each piece with a post-it indicating what you will use it for.
- If you have a separate dining room, preset your table today and arrange your centerpiece.

- **Wednesday is an important day**

- For Braised Turkey, sear the turkey parts and cook the veggies. Place all in the pan according to the recipe and cover well and refrigerate.
- Prepare the sweet potato dish and place it in an oven-proof dish for baking. Cover and refrigerate it.
- Now's also a good time to make your pumpkin pie filling. Refrigerate it.
- Wash your salad greens and dry them in a salad spinner. Store them in a plastic bag with a towel to soak up any extra moisture.
- Make the salad dressing.
- Prepare any part of your hors d'oeuvres that you can.
- If you haven't yet done so, set up both your dining room table(s) and your buffet table with platters and centerpieces.
- Chill beverages as needed; buy ice if necessary.
- Wash all of the dishes and pots and pans you have used and clean all counters and the floor.

- **Thanksgiving Day**—wake up early and thankful that your kitchen is clean and you are organized and ready to enjoy the day.

- Take out your timeline and tape it to the fridge or on a cupboard at eye-level.
 - Refer to it often, checking off completed items and adjusting timing as necessary.

- This is a good place to write down the *actual* time items go into the oven and when to check on them (so you don't have to keep this info in your head).
- Start baking your pies first thing. Remove the filling from the fridge at the same time you take out the crusts. (If the crust has been frozen, it does not need to thaw before prebaking.)
- Eat breakfast as it may be your only meal until dinner.
- Wash and cut up any other vegetable you are serving with your meal, i.e., green beans, broccoli, leafy greens, if you haven't yet done so.
- **Be sure to remove the stuffing, sweet potatoes, turkey and turkey breasts from the refrigerator at least 20 to 30 minutes in advance of putting them into the oven.**
- Make the gravy and let it simmer on the stove.
- Prepare the mashed potatoes.
- Finish your hors d'oeuvres and put them out with napkins and plates.
- Prep any last-minute salad ingredients, such as cucumbers and tomatoes.
- Have some items that your guests that want to can help you with
 - Putting cranberry sauce in a bowl; gravy in a boat.
 - Putting out serving utensils
 - Tossing or composing the salad
 - Slicing and plating the turkey
 - Cooking and plating the green beans or other side vegetables
 - Mashing and plating the potatoes
 - Lighting candles
 - Putting out beverages, glasses, napkins
 - Assisting in setting up the buffet
- Invite your guests to the table for Thanksgiving Dinner

Acknowledge and express your gratitude for the abundance of friends, family food, home and hearth. May you enjoy a most delicious Thanksgiving Day.