

# HOW TO COOK THANKSGIVING

DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO? DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?  
HERE'S A GUIDE TO KEEP YOU ON TRACK FOR THE PERFECT THANKSGIVING MEAL.

## Turkey

## Hosting

## Sides

*First week  
in November*

**Pre-order a fresh turkey from your local grocer or online.**

**Plan the menu and guest list. Be realistic.**

**Need some unique sides?**

Don't know what kind of turkey to get? Here are your main options:

Pro tip: Aim for a later dinner time. Candles make every meal better. Plus, you think you'll have plenty of time to clean, but you won't, and candlelight goes a long way to hide the dust.

We've got a ton, including vegan options, at [splendidtable.org](http://splendidtable.org)

*Two weeks  
before  
Thanksgiving*

- Natural
  - » No artificial ingredients.
- Heritage
  - » Purebred, old breeds of birds. Often juicier and more flavorful, but more expensive.
- Kosher
  - » These are pre-brined. (And kosher, duh.)
- Organic
  - » No antibiotics or animal by-products in feed.
  - » Fresh and frozen.
- Self-basting
  - » Pre-brined. Read label to know with what.

Make note of dietary restrictions of guests. Revise the menu and guest list. Read each recipe making sure there's time and space to make everything. Seriously, be realistic.

**Make two shopping lists.**

The first is for things you'll need in advance, and the other for fresh items to be purchased the day before the meal.

Check for staples: cream, butter, coffee, spices, flour, corn starch, canned stock, etc.

*Weekend  
before  
Thanksgiving*

**If you didn't pre-order a turkey, you'll probably have to go with a frozen one. Get it soon.**

**Clean out the fridge. You'll need the space. (And it needs to be done anyway.)**

**Go shopping with the first list.**

Do your knives need sharpening? Do it today before things get crazy.

*Monday*

**Start defrosting frozen turkey.**

**Clean the house.**

How long will it take to defrost a frozen turkey? Figure 1 day per 5 pounds in the refrigerator (e.g. 10 lbs=2 days, 20 lbs=4 days), or half an hour per 5 pounds in cool water (e.g. 10 lbs=5 hours, 20 lbs=10 hours). Be sure to change the cool water every half an hour.

Yeah, we thought that was funny too. Just make it look presentable. Fresh flowers help. And don't forget the candles.

Pro tip: If you make and bake your pie crusts today, your pies should stay soggy-bottom free.

If you need it, start making ice. And what about a music playlist?

**Making stuffing from scratch?**

Seriously? Whatever. Cube the bread and dry.

*Tuesday*

**Pick up fresh turkey.**

**Prepare things that can be chilled and stored.**

Cranberry sauce, soups, appetizer dips, etc. get better after a few days in the fridge.

**Go shopping with the second list.**

*Wednesday*

**If you're brining, today's the day.**

**Set the table.**

If you still don't have a turkey, you might be running out of options. Here are some ideas:

Now might be a good time to make sure you have the numbers for the local ER and poison control center. Just saying.

1. Turkey parts. They cook faster.
2. Frozen game hens. They're smaller, so they defrost and cook faster.
3. A cooked ham. (Not a frozen ham!)
4. How about a Tofurkey?

Assemble casseroles, stuffing, etc. and store in the fridge uncooked. Bake sweet potatoes today for final prep tomorrow.

If you have one oven, bake your pies today.

*Thanksgiving  
morning*

**Time to cook that bird.**

**Tune into Turkey Confidential, 2 hours of live culinary triage on the day you need it most!**

If you have two ovens (lucky!), bake your pies today.

How long will it take to cook? Roast 13-15 minutes per pound at 325° or until thigh registers 165°-170°.

**Chill the wine.**

*During dinner*

Just starting to think about dinner? Yikes! Call around for reservations. Maybe it's time for a traditional Chinese takeout meal.

**Warm the desserts in the oven and make coffee.**

*End of the day*

Turkey freezes well, so strip the bird, refrigerate what you can use in the next 5 days, and freeze the rest. Freezing dries the turkey a bit, so keep some broth or gravy as well.

**Be thankful.**