

# **STRESS-FREE THANKSGIVING DINNER PLANNING & TIMING GUIDE**

If you are having turkey for Thanksgiving dinner, here are some common questions to consider:

**HOW MUCH TURKEY DO I NEED?** Plan to feed at least the same number of people as the weight of the turkey in pounds. For example, a 12 pound turkey will feed at least 12-16 people; a 15 pound turkey will feed at least 15-20 people.

**FRESH OR FROZEN TURKEY?** It's really your preference because the quality of frozen and fresh turkey meat is about equal. Frozen turkeys are less expensive and can be stored in the freezer for at least a month with no loss in meat moisture and tenderness but require time to defrost. Fresh turkeys are more perishable and are therefore more expensive because of how they have to be handled to get them to market safely. Fresh turkeys should be refrigerated until they're ready to be prepared for roasting and should be cooked within a day or two of purchase to ensure maximum freshness.

## **THANKSGIVING DINNER PLANNING AND TIMING**

**4-5 DAYS BEFORE THANKSGIVING:** Buy **all the ingredients** you'll need for the recipes you want

to make (see [Thanksgiving Dinner Shopping List Organized by Grocery Store Aisle](#) for the all the ingredients listed in the recipes referred to in this planning guide).

## **2-3 DAYS BEFORE THANKSGIVING:**

- If you're using a **FROZEN TURKEY**, see **HOW TO THAW A FROZEN TURKEY** in the [Stress-Free Roast Turkey](#) recipe for the thawing method that best suits your needs.

## **1 DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING:**

- Make [Fresh & Easy Apple Pie](#).
- Prepare **STUFFING** and refrigerate it covered in plastic wrap until an hour before baking it so that it can start to come to room temperature for more even cooking (see [Quick & Easy Bread Stuffing](#) recipe, except don't preheat oven in step 7).
- Make **FRESH CRANBERRY SAUCE** (see [Quick & Easy Fresh Cranberry Sauce](#) recipe).

**THANKSGIVING DAY:** For a **12-15 POUND TURKEY**, start your preparations 4 1/2 - 5 hours before mealtime. As a [rule of thumb](#) for any **TURKEY** weighing up to 15 pounds *using the cooking technique shown in this book*, plan 1 hour to

clean, season and let the **TURKEY** rest at room temperature for more even cooking. Then plan to roast the **TURKEY** for 10 minutes per pound *without filling the **TURKEY** with **STUFFING*** - stuffing the **TURKEY** only adds more cooking time, which causes the **MEAT** to dry out and toughen. Finally, allow an additional 30 minutes after roasting for the **TURKEY** to rest so that the **meat juices** settle before carving.

### **4-5 HOURS BEFORE DINNER:**

- Clean, season and let the **TURKEY** rest at room temperature for 1 hour before cooking (see Stress-Free Roast Turkey recipe, through step 6).
- Peel or clean, then cut and cover **POTATOES** with water for **MASHED POTATOES** (see Quick & Easy Fresh Mashed Potatoes recipe, through step 3, except don't turn on the stove).

### **ABOUT 2 ½ HOURS BEFORE DINNER:**

- Preheat oven to 450 degrees (230 degrees Celsius) and start roasting the **TURKEY** (see Stress-Free Roast Turkey recipe, steps 7 and 8).

## 1 HOUR BEFORE DINNER:

- Turn the **TURKEY** *breast-side up* for last 30 minutes of roasting (see Stress-Free Roast Turkey recipe, steps 9 and 10).

## 45 MINUTES BEFORE DINNER:

- Cook **POTATOES** for **MASHED POTATOES** (see Quick & Easy Fresh Mashed Potatoes recipe, steps 3-6).
- Put **CRANBERRY SAUCE** on the table.

## 1/2 HOUR BEFORE DINNER

- Take the **TURKEY** out of the oven, check for doneness and let it rest for 30 minutes before carving (see Stress-Free Roast Turkey recipe, steps 11 and 12 ).
- Bake **STUFFING** (see Quick & Easy Bread Stuffing recipe, steps 8 and 9).
- Make **TURKEY GRAVY** (see Quick & Easy Fresh Turkey Gravy recipe).
- Finish **MASHED POTATOES** (see Quick & Easy Fresh Mashed Potatoes recipe, steps 7-11).

## **DINNER TIME**

- Carve **TURKEY** ([Stress-Free Roast Turkey](#) recipe, steps 13-15).
- Happy Thanksgiving!**

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