# How to Cook Thanksgiving

## Turkey

- **First week in November**
  - Pre-order a fresh turkey from your local grocer or online.
  - Don't know what kind of turkey to get? Here are your main options:
    - **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.

- **Two weeks before Thanksgiving**
  - If you didn’t pre-order a turkey, you’ll probably have to go with a frozen one. Get it soon.

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

## Hosting

- **Plan the menu and guest list.**
  - Be realistic.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - Pro tip: Look for recipes that use the same oven temperature so they can cook at the same time.

## Sides

- **Need some unique sides?**
  - We've got a ton, including vegan options, at splendidtable.org

- **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.

- **Clean the house.**
  - Yeah, we thought that was funny too.
  - Just make it look presentable. Fresh flowers help. And don’t forget the candles.
  - If you need it, start making ice.
  - And what about a music playlist?

- **Go shopping with the first list.**
  - Pie tip: If you make and bake your pie crusts today, your pies should stay soggy-bottom free.

- **Making stuffing from scratch?**
  - Seriously? Whatever.
  - Cube the bread and dry.

- **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.**
  - Assemble casseroles, stuffing, etc. and store in the fridge uncooked. Bake sweet potatoes, etc. for the reap tomorrow.
  - If you have one oven, bake your pies today.

## Thanksgiving morning

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

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

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

- **Chill the wine.**

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

## 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 3 days, and freeze the rest. Freezing dries the turkey a bit, so keep some broth or gravy as well.**

- **Be thankful.**