



# Thanksgiving Prep Timeline

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This Thanksgiving is going to be extra special, because, with caution, we can celebrate with friends and family.

Here at our house, we'll be celebrating all being together, the family of 6 back together and all around the table, enjoying the day, and our mealtime traditions.

A bit of planning is essential for my sanity, even when with just the 6 of us around the table. We've still a lot of food to make, and those of us cooking would certainly like to relax and enjoy the day without standing in the kitchen all day long.

We are excited to have us all around the table, and I'm ready to start thinking about what I'm going to prepare, and how I can get it all done.

I like to start planning and prepping a bit over 2 weeks from the big feast, so that I can take things slow leading up to Thanksgiving, and when the day arrives, I can actually enjoy myself – and time with the family.

Planning and prepping are essential for success in the kitchen. I find, that when I don't plan, I'm frustrated and frazzled – exactly what I don't want to be during Thanksgiving.

To help keep me on track, I've taken to creating this Thanksgiving Prep Timeline to keep me on task. Why not give it a try?



## *Two Weeks Out*

This is the week to take some control of your planning. By planning the logistics of how you will get a meal on the table, can be a lifesaver once the day arrives. Putting everything in writing is a great way to ensure you will not forget anything – from an essential side dish, to an ingredient needed to prepare something.

### **Create a Menu**

What are you preparing? Yes, I know you're preparing a turkey, but how are you preparing it? What will accompany it? Who is making the pies, buns and even breakfast? Take the time to sit down and create your menu for the day. Even if you prepare the same meal every year, this process will put everything on your radar. Oh -- don't forget to think about breakfast.

### **Decide Who is Making What**

Does your brother make a delicious Pecan Pie, and your mom make fabulous dinner rolls? Don't be a hero and try to make it all, ask your guests to prepare something for the feast – and take a few things off your plate.

### **Make a Shopping list**

Once you have your recipes on hand, use them to create a shopping list. Include everything, even if you think you have it on hand. Then . . .

### **Check your Pantry**

Nothing is worse than assuming you have an ingredient to make your family's favorite pie, only to find out you don't have it in your pantry. Compare your shopping list to what you have, or don't have, in your pantry, and adjust your shopping list accordingly.

### **Tend to Your Overflowing Refrigerator**

Tidy up, clean and organize your fridge and freezer, making room for all the Thanksgiving meal items to arrive. Remember, you'll also need room for leftovers!)



## *One Week Out*

Hopefully you have made progress in your Thanksgiving dinner planning. This week, it is time to follow through on anything you didn't finish last week, and make sure that you have everything to create a delicious celebration.

### **Kitchen Tools**

Beyond the ingredients you need, what about those kitchen gadgets and key items that you may only pull out once a year to prepare the meal. Take stock of what you have – dust off that roasting pan, scrape off any of last year's bits of food you may have missed, and locate other roasting essentials including trussing tools, a baster, and a cooking thermometer. Nothing is worse than spending time digging these items out on the morning of Thanksgiving (or realizing you don't have it).

### **A Bit of Shopping & Make-Ahead Items**

Get ahead of the mayhem and make whatever you can ahead of time, and then freeze it. For instance, make bread for stuffing, and dinner rolls, then freeze them. If you are making dough for dinner rolls, don't let it rise. Instead, immediately shape the rolls and freeze them on a cookie sheet (lined with parchment). Then once they're frozen, bag them in an airtight container and freeze until ready to use. On Thanksgiving let them thaw and rise while you're cooking, and then bake them when the time comes. And, if you didn't make pie dough last week, go ahead and prep your pies and then freeze.

### **Tend to the Table**

Wash your linens, and take stock of any extra chairs you may need, along with leaves of that formal dining room table. Often silver utensils will need to be polished, and serving dishes dusted and cleaned.



## *One Week Out (cont.)*

### **Do a Bit of Shopping**

Continue to get ahead of the game by shopping. Review your recipes and double check your shopping list for quantities. Then determine if there anything on your list that you can purchase this week. This could range from any dried herbs and spices to canned foods and durable vegetables such as potatoes and onions, for example. Don't forget other items such as parchment paper, foil, cooking thermometers (and batteries) as well as those kitchen gadgets you'll need.

### **Figure out Timing for the Big Day**

Timing is everything when it comes to a holiday meal. Don't find yourself with an uncooked, or cold, side dish because it has been out of the oven for too long. Revisit your recipes and create a timeline of when you'll prepare, and cook, each item. What can be prepared stovetop, while the turkey is in the oven? What can be cooked in a countertop oven? And, is there anything that can be made the day before and simply reheated in the microwave, or in the oven once the turkey is out and 'resting' prior to carving? By creating a timeline of when items begin to prepped and cooked, and referring to it throughout the day, you can certainly alleviate some of the last-minute scramble to get everything on the table, warm and delicious, at the same time.



## *Week of Thanksgiving*

### Monday

Do a final review of your shopping list and head out to the store to gather anything else you may need.

### Tuesday

Review your recipes and be sure to understand the time it takes to prepare each element. If you haven't done so last week, write down the order of preparation, and create a timeline so that you'll have room in the oven to get everything completed together.

### Wednesday

It is time to bake your pies, and prebake your stuffing if cooked outside the turkey, and then prep any ingredients for Thanksgiving day cooking. If space allows, go ahead and set the table.

### Thursday

Plop those pre-made cinnamon rolls in the oven for breakfast. Finalize turkey prep and start cooking.

Hopefully your efforts for better planning will pay off. By tackling a few prep steps in the two weeks prior to the big day, you can feel more confident that there won't be any last-minute surprises – and, trips to the grocery store!

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