

SAZ'S™

Cooking Notes

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Thanksgiving Tips

Celebrate the Flavors of Thanksgiving

Think of Thanksgiving and you think of rich aromas wafting through the house and savory flavors that tempt the palate. And for those who love cooking, it is the holiday that reigns supreme. Here are a few tips that we hope will make your holiday more relaxing and enjoyable.

Planning is everything. Taking a little time a week or so in advance will make the day less stressful. A simple checklist might start with

Who's coming to dinner and are there any dietary concerns?

Ah, it used to be so easy. Now you may have to consider whether any of your guests are vegetarians or vegans, or if they have food allergies. If you don't know, simply look at a balanced menu with choices that will allow for a few surprises. Traditional Thanksgiving meals include a multitude of delicious root vegetables sure to please all. While your mashed potatoes may be brimming with cream and butter, you could also offer broccoli with lemon juice or baked apples and sweet potatoes flavored with orange juice and fresh orange zest.

Plan the menu – including how you plan to cook the turkey.

While there are many fine new trends for cooking turkeys (frying, grilling), if you love a beautifully roasted turkey here are a few tips.

- Let your bird come to room temperature for an hour before it goes in the oven for more even cooking.
- Start your turkey in a hot oven (425° - 475°) for a beautiful browned skin and moist meat, then reset the heat to 350° for the remainder of the cooking time.
- If you baste, baste strategically - every time you open the oven door heat escapes. Baste before the bird goes in and then a few times max.
- Rest the turkey for at least a half hour before carving to ensure its juiciness.

For a thorough easy to read primer check out "Talking Turkey" on Epicurious.com [<http://www.epicurious.com/articlesguides/howtocook/primers/turkey>]

Do you have the pans and cooking utensils you need to make life easier?

- Baster - a good baster will make it easy to pour juices over the bird and the new angled designs let you baste quicker in order to retain oven heat.
- Meat thermometer - essential to ensuring your bird is done to perfection and the new leave-in varieties allow cooks to keep the oven door closed, again retaining the heat.
- Potato ricer - makes making mashed potatoes a breeze - and not a lump to be found!
- Fat separator - a serious help in making gravy. Pour juices into the fat separator and the fat rises to the top allowing you to syphon the pure juices out the spout.

How are you planning to present the food?

- Take time to ensure your serving platters are big enough for your bird.
- Make sure you're not one dish short well before the final table setting (oh no - I forgot Aunt Betty broke one of the dishes last year!)
- Accent dishes are a fun way to serve soups, salads, palate cleansers and sides and bring a festive flair to the table.

Bon Appétit!

