



Planning Thanksgiving Dinner



Does planning out the Thanksgiving dinner for your family or guests seem intimidating? I know my first Thanksgiving dinner hosted at our house was a bit stressful and seemed overwhelming until following these simple steps to bring everything into an organized project that was actually enjoyable! We hope this will help you enjoy planning and hosting your Thanksgiving Dinner this year as well.

The Week Before:

1. **Plan your table décor**—Think table cover, dinnerware, serving ware, centerpiece(s), menu cards or place markers for each guest; envision the table and make sure you have everything on hand or make a list of items needed to round out the décor. Remember if you're serving family style that you will want to leave room for food service without having a cluttered table.
2. **Make your grocery list** - Round up the recipes for dishes you intend to serve and create your [shopping list](#), adding any of the décor items you need from your plan above.
3. **Buy the turkey** — It's on sale now, most likely, and will keep long enough in the fridge at this point for purchasing a fresh one and not needing to freeze it (and avoid thawing).





Note: This plan is based on a Thanksgiving dinner including Turkey, Cornbread Dressing, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Cranberry Sauce, Green Bean Casserole, Green Salad, Dinner Rolls, Pumpkin Pie and Pecan Pie, serving 6-10 people. Obviously there are many other menu item choices that could be substituted in or added, such as [sweet potato dishes](#), [roasted vegetables](#), [fruit pies](#), [stuffing](#), etc. This generic plan should still work with most of those options as well.

Two Days Before:



1. Make the Cornbread for Dressing —

Tomorrow it will be time to prepare the cornbread dressing, but today we can [bake the cornbread](#). After baking and cooling the cornbread, crumble it up and store in an airtight container or plastic baggie until ready to use tomorrow.

- 2. Prepare Pies** - Whether making your own [pie crust](#) or using store bought, go ahead and make the [pumpkin](#) and [pecan](#) pies today. They store easily in air tight containers (or covered tightly with aluminum foil) and do not need to be refrigerated. However, if making fruit pies be sure to refrigerate until ready to bring to room temperature or reheat for serving.



- 3. Table Décor** - If there is any preparation needed for table décor such as printing or crafting [menu cards](#) or place markers, making candleholders or arrangements, now is a good time to take care of that as well.





One Day Before:

1. **Bake the Cornbread Dressing** — Now it is time to assemble the cornbread dressing and bake thoroughly. Then cover with foil, refrigerate, and tomorrow bring to room temperature before reheating to serve.



2. **Prepare Green Bean Casserole** - The green bean casserole is so easy to throw together and bakes quickly; then it is ready to simply reheat and serve tomorrow. Be sure to refrigerate overnight, then remove from fridge in morning to allow to come to room temperature before reheating for serving.

3. **Make Dinner Rolls** - Mix up the dough for the dinner rolls and let rise while working on the cornbread dressing and green bean casserole. Then form rolls and let rise again before baking. Once rolls are cooled, separate and store in an airtight container until ready to reheat for a few minutes just before serving tomorrow.



4. **Now relax and enjoy some family time before the big day tomorrow!**





Thanksgiving Day is Here!

- 1. Roast the Turkey** - For a 15 pound turkey, you will need to **plan about 4 hours** in the oven for roasting well; only the reheating tasks need to be done after that (allow about 20 minutes to reheat casserole & dressing, then 10 more for reheating rolls). Work backwards from your planned eating hour to determine when to start the turkey.
- 2. Set up Table and Decorate**
- 3. Cook Potatoes & Mash** - About 90 minutes before dinner time, peel potatoes and begin cooking for mashed potatoes (once ready, keep warm on stovetop or on warm in crockpot or in a dish with heated carrier).
- 4. Toss Salad** - Prep salad ingredients and toss together while potatoes are cooking; place salad in fridge until ready to serve.
- 5. Make Cranberry Sauce** - Start this sauce, too, while potatoes are cooking; it **takes about 25 minutes** to make and can be served warm or at room temperature.
- 6. Reheat Dressing and Green Bean Casserole** - When turkey is ready to remove from oven (keep it covered until ready to slice), **place dressing and green bean casserole in oven for 20 minutes** to reheat at 300 degrees F.
- 7. Prepare Gravy** - After removing turkey from oven, pull out pan juice to use in making gravy on stovetop. Only **takes about 10 minutes** to come together, but keep a close eye on it so it doesn't burn, stirring consistently. Remove from heat and keep lid on pan to stay warm until ready to serve.
- 8. Reheat Dinner Rolls** - After removing dressing & green bean casserole from oven, **slip dinner rolls into oven to heat for 5-8 minutes** 'til warm and ready to serve.
- 9. Enlist guests or family members to help place dishes on table or serving area.**



Enjoy!