

THANKSGIVING PLANNER

Thanksgiving doesn't have to be a frenzy of last-minute preparations. Our Thanksgiving planner eliminates guesswork, ensuring an enjoyable meal – even for the host.



TASK

EARLY NOVEMBER

Choose a menu.

If you're ordering a fresh turkey, do it now; if you're buying a frozen turkey, you still have time, but don't wait until the last minute. Remember: It's best to allow four to five days for it to thaw.

Floral centerpieces finish off a well-set table. Florists are busy this time of year, so order flowers now.

FOUR DAYS BEFORE THANKSGIVING

Start defrosting the frozen turkey in the coldest part of the refrigerator.

Compose a shopping list, and purchase all non-perishables. Wait until the day before Thanksgiving to buy salad greens, fresh bread, or seafood.

If you're baking pies for dessert, make the dough for the crust, roll it out, lay it into pie plates, and freeze.

TWO DAYS BEFORE THANKSGIVING

Prepare the serving pieces, plates, flatware, glasses, etc.

If using cloth napkins or tablecloths, iron them now.

Make the cranberry sauce; a couple of days in the refrigerator will give the flavors time to develop.

Homemade stuffing often calls for stale bread; cut and cube the bread now, and set the cubes out in a single layer on a baking sheet.

ONE DAY BEFORE THANKSGIVING

Pick up the fresh turkey from the market.

Prepare the stuffing, but leave out any raw eggs until you stuff the bird.

Make the giblet stock for the gravy .

Defrost pie dough; assemble and bake pies.

Peel the potatoes, then refrigerate them in a pot of cold water.

Make the vegetables and side dishes that require baking, such as casseroles, and reheat them tomorrow; or assemble them today, and cook them right before dinner.

Set the table tonight or first thing in the morning.



TASK

THANKSGIVING DAY

9:30 AM

Remove the turkey from the refrigerator, allowing it to sit for ninety minutes to two hours at room temperature. If your stuffing recipe calls for eggs, add them now.

11:15 AM

Preheat the oven, and stuff the turkey.

11:30 AM

Put the turkey in the oven, basting it every half hour.

12:00 PM

Chill the white wine.

1:00 PM

Make the mashed potatoes. Closer to dinnertime, place them in a heat-proof bowl and set them at the back of the stove over simmering water.

3:00 PM

Whip the cream for the pie; prepare the coffee, but do not brew it until about twenty minutes before it will be served.

4:00 PM

Check the temperature of the turkey at the thigh, which is the thickest part. If the thermometer reads 180°, remove the turkey from the oven. If not, check the temperature every fifteen minutes until the bird is done.

4:15 PM

The turkey will need to sit for thirty minutes prior to carving. Take advantage of the break to make the gravy and any last-minute vegetables.

4:30 to 5:00 PM

Call everyone to the table. Start the coffee maker just before sitting down.