

The Less Stress Thanksgiving Dinner Planner



3-4 weeks before

- Make carpet cleaning appointment.
- Think about how many people you'll be hosting, if you will have a sit down dinner or buffet, what food your guests will like to eat and make a budget.
- Invite guests, keep track of RSVPs and what guests are bringing with Evite, Facebook, or Sign Up Genius which, is especially helpful if you are hosting a large crowd.
- Find out how many kids are coming so you can be prepared with juice, toys, activities, and a kids' table
- Plan your menu around what your guests have offered to bring, if you know. Keep in mind how much oven space you have and that it may be helpful if someone brings a side dish made in their own oven.
- Think about a delicious menu that is all encompassing- one or two meats, three or four sides (two starches and two non-starch vegetables) gravy, cranberry sauce, appetizers, dinner rolls, dessert variety, beverages, condiments, etc.
- Decide what beverages you'll serve-both alcoholic & non-alcoholic (include coffee, tea, creamer) and kids' drinks.
- If you will be hosting out-of- town guests, make a list of what you'll be serving them for breakfast and lunch on Thanksgiving Day and add it to your grocery list.
- Write out a first draft menu including beverages.
- Order turkey or ham if you wish to have a specific fresh turkey or Honey Baked Ham or similar.
- Decide what tableware you'll use-table clothes, napkins, centerpieces.
- Make a grocery list categorized by grocery section i.e. dairy, produce, meat, bakery, etc.
- Make a list of supplies for other retail stores i.e. Party City, Target, Costco Inc.



2-3 weeks before

- Confirm RSVPs and contact people from which you have not received an RSVP.
- Decide if you want to brine or fry the turkey. If so, find a brine recipe noting the brining time and add the ingredients you need to your shopping lists. If you choose to fry the turkey, research the method and ingredients you'll need and add them to your shopping lists.
- Peruse the recipes you will be making, check your pantry and add the ingredients you need to your grocery list.
- Finalize menu and store lists.
- Wash table clothes, your good dishes, serving platters, wine glasses, coolers, if needed.
- Think about table set up. If you need to rent/borrow tables and chairs, do it now.
- If you are having a buffet-style dinner, think about where and how you'll set up the food. Remove extraneous small appliances and kitchen items from your counter tops to make extra space.

1 week before

- Any planning items that have not been done prior to now, do it!
- Peruse your recipes and make sure you have all of the ingredients you need
- Buy non-perishable groceries, items and beverages.

Thanksgiving Monday

- In the morning, place the frozen turkey in refrigerator if you are using one.
- Ensure you have all ingredients (perishable and non-perishable) for your menu, including all beverages.
- Make fresh cranberry relish if you choose not to use canned.
- Clean your house and set up bedrooms (clean sheets, make room in closets, activities for kids) for out of town guests if applicable.

Thanksgiving Tuesday

- Think about any ingredients you forgot and buy what you still need.
- Make the desserts.
- Clean your powder room, vacuum and dust any rooms where most of your guests will be congregating.
- If there is anything else you can do on Tuesday that will alleviate the work for you on Wednesday or Thursday, do it. Don't procrastinate.



Thanksgiving Wednesday

- In the morning, make the turkey brine and brine the turkey according to recipe directions.
- Make or prepare appetizers, cover, and store them in a second refrigerator, if you have one.
- Wash and cut up vegetables you'll be using for stuffing or side dishes.
- Prepare side dishes if they can be made ahead.
- Set up tables and chairs

Thanksgiving Day

- Ask a family member to decorate and help set up.
- Have someone buy or bring ice if you need it.
- Chill white wine and/or beer
- Set the table(s) with table clothes, silverware, napkins, centerpieces, and light candles.
- Make the stuffing and stuff the turkey, if applicable.
- Make the potatoes.
- Place turkey in oven according to package directions.
- Make the turkey gravy from pan drippings if you are making your own gravy.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help setting up, cooking, cleaning up afterward. Your closest family members will not mind helping a gracious host. Smile and enjoy yourself.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!