



The LESS STRESS Christmas Dinner Planner

3-4 WEEKS BEFORE

- If your carpets need cleaning, now is the time to make the appointment.
- If you need furniture (extra tables and chairs) start shopping, rental or borrowing process.
- Think about how many people you'll be hosting, if you will have a sit-down dinner or buffet, what food your guests like and make a budget.
- Invite guests, keep track of RSVPs and what guests are bringing with Evite, Facebook Event, 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.
- Ponder an all-encompassing menu- 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- alcoholic, non-alcoholic- coffee, tea, kids' drinks.
- If you'll host out-of-town guests, make a list of breakfast and lunch items to serve on Christmas Day and add them to your grocery list.
- Write out a first draft menu including beverages.
- Order the main dish- turkey, ham, beef, duck, etc.
- Decide what tableware you'll use- table cloths, napkins, charger plates, 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. Target, Costco Inc., Party City

2-3 WEEKS BEFORE

- Confirm RSVPs and contact people who have not.
- Decide how you'll prepare the main dish (brine or fry the turkey, make beef or ham in oven or slow cooker. If so, find a brine recipe or turkey frying method, note the brining time and add the ingredients you need to your shopping lists.
- Peruse your chosen recipes, check your pantry and add the ingredients you need to your grocery list.
- Finalize menu and store lists.
- Wash tablecloths, your good dishes, serving platters and utensils, wine glasses, coolers, if needed.
- If you are having a buffet-style dinner, think about where and how you'll set up the food.

1 Week Before Christmas

- Any planning items that have not been done prior to now, do it!
- Buy non-perishable recipe ingredients, groceries, items and beverages.



3-5 Days before Christmas

- In the morning, place the frozen turkey in refrigerator to begin thawing according to package directions.
- Buy all ingredients (perishable and remaining 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.

2 Days before Christmas

- 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 you forgot to thaw the meat, put it in a water bath and change water hourly, put in refrigerator overnight in water bath.
- Do any tasks that will alleviate work for you on Wednesday or Thursday.
- Hang the mistletoe.

Christmas Eve

- Prep main dish- If you're brining a turkey, make the turkey brine in the morning and begin process. 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 appetizers and side dishes; prepare make ahead side dishes.
- Remove small appliances and kitchen items from your counter tops to make extra space.
- Set up tables and chairs.

Christmas Day

- Ask a family member to decorate and help set up.
- Have someone bring ice if you need it.
- Chill wine and/or beer. Prepare bar for cocktails.
- Set the table(s) with table cloths, silverware, napkins, centerpieces, and light the candles.
- Make the stuffing and stuff the turkey, if applicable.
- Make the potatoes. You can peel them, put them in water and cook them hours later.
- Set up the buffet, if applicable.
- Place main dish in oven according to package or recipe directions.
- Make the 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 family or friends won't mind helping a gracious host. Smile and have a wonderful Christmas!