

Holiday

— RECIPES —

Flavorful Dishes and Desserts for the Season of Celebrating



Tips to simplify holiday cooking

Food is an important component of the holiday season for millions

of people across the globe. Many a holiday host has wrestled with what to serve for their gathering and how to prepare meals while still finding time to spend with loved ones. Sometimes simplicity is the way to go when hosting for the holidays. Just because certain dishes are less labor-intensive to prepare does not mean they lack flavor. Hosts can consider these tips to simplify holiday cooking this year.

- **Utilize shop-from-home services.**

Supermarkets can be particularly busy this time of year. By shopping from the comfort of home, holiday hosts can sort through their lists and let someone else navigate crowded store aisles. The small fee involved for this service can be well worth the time saved.

- **Scale back the sides.** Some hosts feel an impressive dinner spread is one with plenty of options. Several side dishes requires a lot of time and money, and such foods may take away from the star of the table. Guests might fill up on rolls, potatoes and salads, leaving little room for the main course. Scaling back on sides creates more time for hosts to mingle with family and ensures everyone gets their fill of the main course.

- **Delegate some of the work.** Asking guests to bring a little something to the meal doesn't immediately turn it into a potluck. However, it can reduce some of the work the host has to do. Figure out who is bound to be an early arrival, and ask



that person to bring an appetizer. Individuals who like to be fashionably late can bring side dishes or desserts. Delegating beverage detail also can be a time-saver.

- **Familiar is often fabulous.** A major holiday is seldom the right time to experiment with a new, labor-intensive dish. Rather than risk an epic fail, hosts should stick to meals they have prepared before. Also, familiar flavors may appeal to a greater number of guests.

- **Include some prepared foods.** While it is perfectly alright to cater the entire dinner, that can prove costly. If budget doesn't allow for a fully

catered meal, supplement with some prepared dishes to help save time, particularly those recipes that can be complicated.

- **Make it a buffet.** Sit-down dinners require careful timing to ensure all foods are set out hot and ready-to-eat. A buffet-style meal involves preparing trays of food in advance, and then setting them to heat in chafing dishes until meal time. This involves far less strategizing with meal preparation and frees up time for hosts to spend with guests.

Holiday meals require a lot of effort, but some handy suggestions can ensure hosts have ample time to spend with loved ones.

Tips to make holiday dinners more affordable



“Eat, drink and be merry”

is a familiar refrain come the holiday season. Hosting a holiday dinner is a great way to welcome family and friends and encourage them to embrace the festive nature of the season.

However, the high cost of foods and other essentials may have certain holiday hosts rethinking their menus and their guest lists this year.

A 2024 Pew Research Poll showed Americans worried about the state of the economy cite the price of food and the cost of housing as their foremost concerns. More than 90 percent of Americans say they are “very” or “somewhat” concerned about the cost of food and consumer goods.

Average annual food-at-home prices were 5 percent higher in 2023 than in 2022, according to the USDA Economic Research Service. Inflation has been a key topic of discussion for much of the last three years. While data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates inflation continues to cool off from all-time highs, consumers are still anxious about how food prices are affecting their bottom lines and their holiday entertaining plans. According to Farmdoc Daily, which offers agriculture-based data analysis, 68 percent of U.S. consumers expected rising food prices to impact their holiday meals in 2023. Similar concerns may prevail in 2024.

Stretching holiday entertaining dollars comes down to being savvy. With that in mind, hosts can consider these meal modification strategies this holiday season.

• **Replace a high-cost protein with a more affordable alternative.** Sometimes a holiday meal calls for pulling out all of the stops, and that may mean spending more on a special main dish. Rather than a luxury like beef tenderloin or prime rib roast, consider a less expensive dish, such as a pork tenderloin, roasted chicken or even seafood.

• **Add extra side dishes.** Incorporate an inexpensive item like rice, beans or an extra vegetable side dish into the meal so that plates can be filled with the less expensive foods and fewer high-cost items.

• **Shop the sales.** Plan meals around a supermarket circular. While you may have had one holiday dinner idea in mind, once you see what the stores are putting on sale you can stock up on those items and build the dinner around them. If you find a good deal several weeks away from the holidays, buy the items and freeze them until they’re needed.

• **Buy generic or store brands.** Chances are no one will notice if you use generic or store brand ingredients, which can be considerably cheaper than their brand-name counterparts. Many are even manufactured in the same facilities that produce the name brand stuff.

• **Make an affordable drink.** Alcohol costs can add up when you try to cater to everyone’s tastes and preferences. Make one or two bulk drinks, like a holiday punch or signature cocktail, so you can keep alcohol costs in check.

• **Stretch the snacks.** Instead of a charcuterie board filled with expensive cheeses and meats, opt for dips and raw vegetables or a low-cost cheese ball made with cream cheese and herbs with crackers. Keep snacks to a minimum; otherwise, guests may fill up and then not have room for dinner.

Holiday hosts can embrace various strategies to save money on family meals this season.

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Simplify
your feast by
slow cooking your
Thanksgiving
turkey

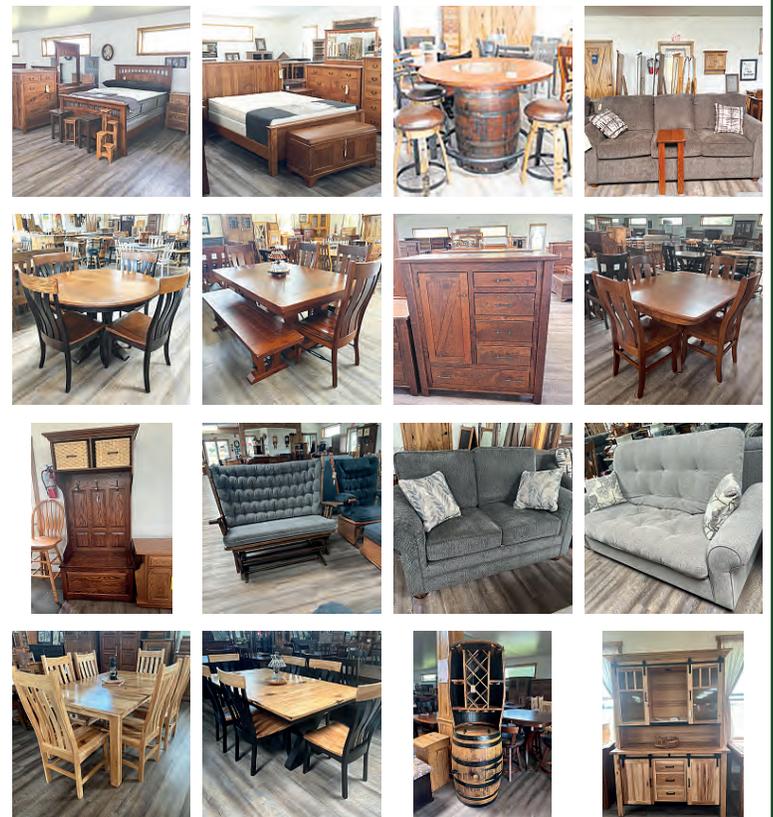


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Holiday Turkey

Makes 15 servings

- 1 fresh turkey, about 15 pounds, preferably free-range
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 quart apple cider
- 2 teaspoons dried poultry seasoning
- Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Food features prominently in many holiday celebrations, but perhaps no holiday is more closely associated with eating than Thanksgiving. In fact, Thanksgiving and food are so closely connected that many people lovingly refer to the holiday as “Turkey Day,” which is an homage to the popular main course that finds its way to millions of Thanksgiving dinner tables across the country each year.

Side dishes abound on Thanksgiving dinner tables, but turkey still takes center stage. That reality can put some pressure on hosts tasked with preparing the meal for their family and friends. Unlike some other dishes that require a laundry list of ingredients and lots of prep work, turkey is a relatively hands-off main course. However, home cooks know a dried out turkey is not on anyone’s holiday wish list. Slow cooking can help to avoid such a result. This recipe for “Holiday Turkey,” courtesy Andrew Schloss’ “Cooking Slow” (Chronicle Books), calls for slow cooking the bird. Such an approach should result in a delicious and mouth-watering main course that satisfies anyone who’s anxious to sit down at the Thanksgiving dinner table this year.

Remove the giblets from the turkey and discard (or save for another use). Rinse the turkey inside and out and pat dry with paper towels. Rub it all over with salt and pepper. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 12 hours and up to 24 hours. During that time, the surface of the turkey will become visibly dry and the skin will tighten; this encourages a nice crisp skin on the finished bird.

Remove the turkey from the refrigerator 1 hour before you plan to start roasting. Preheat the oven to 450 F.

Put the turkey on a rack set in a large, flameproof roasting pan. Drizzle the oil over the top.

Roast for 1 hour. Reduce the oven temperature to 175 F. Pour the cider into the roasting pan and sprinkle the poultry seasoning in the liquid. Continue roasting until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a thigh (but not touching bone) registers to 170 F.

Transfer the turkey to a carving board, tent loosely with aluminum foil, and let rest for about 15 minutes (see tip). Meanwhile, skim the fat from the surface of the liquid in the pan. Put the roasting pan over two burners and bring the pan drippings to a boil over high heat. Cook until the juices reduce and thicken slightly, enough to coat a spoon, about 10 minutes. Taste for seasoning. Carve the turkey and serve with cider pan juices.

Resting tip: Slow-roasted meats need far less resting time (pretty much none) than those that are traditionally roasted. The reason for resting meat that has been roasted at a high temperature is to allow juices that have collected in the cooler center time to migrate back into the dryer (hotter) exterior sections after it comes out of the oven. Because slow-roasted meats are cooked evenly and a temperature that keeps most of the juices in place, a resting period is largely unnecessary. A brief resting time does allow the meat to become a little firmer as it cools, making it easier to carve.

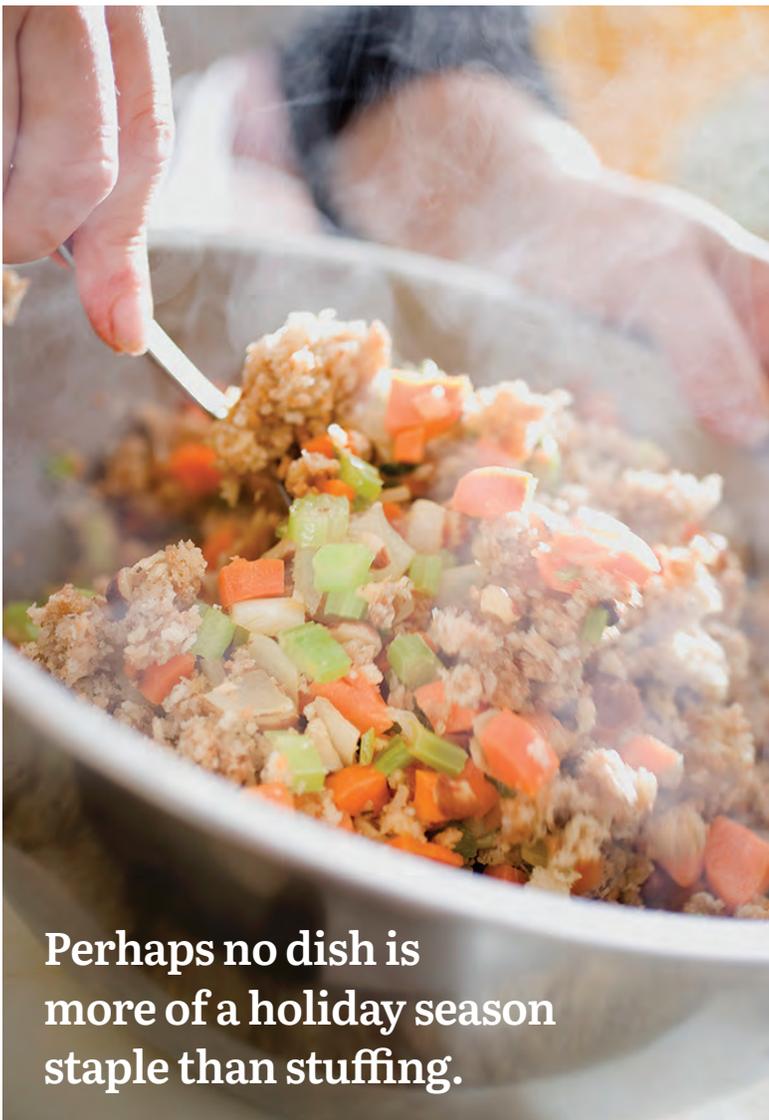
A seasonal staple

no holiday dinner table should go without

Certain foods are synonymous with particular times of year.

Who can resist an ice cream cone in mid-summer? Or turn down a piece of apple pie on a fall afternoon?

Come the holiday season, many dishes reappear to excite the palates of people celebrating with family and friends. Perhaps no dish is more of a holiday season staple than stuffing. As families prepare to gather around the dinner table this holiday season, celebrants can find a place for this "Bread Stuffing With Vegetables" courtesy of Lines+Angles.



Perhaps no dish is more of a holiday season staple than stuffing.

Bread Stuffing With Vegetables

Makes 8 servings

Non-stick cooking spray, for the pan

3 tablespoons cooking oil

4 stalks celery, washed, trimmed and chopped

2 medium onions, peeled and chopped

2 carrots, peeled and chopped

2 cloves of garlic, peeled and finely chopped

4 cups dried whole grain bread cubes

1 tablespoon dried sage leaves, crushed

1 teaspoon marjoram

1/2 cup low-sodium turkey or chicken broth

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Coat a 9 x 13-inch pan or casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Heat cooking oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add celery, onions and carrots. Sauté until tender crisp, about 8 to 10 minutes. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute longer.
3. Place cubed bread in a large bowl. Sprinkle with dried sage and marjoram, tossing to distribute spices. Add sautéed vegetables to the bread mixture and drizzle mixture with broth, stirring to distribute.
4. Transfer stuffing to prepared pan, season with salt and pepper and cover with aluminum foil. Bake for about 30 minutes or until heated through. Serve.

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 40 minutes

Total time: 1 hour

Difficulty: Easy

Let this side dish become the center of attention *this holiday season*

Family meals are a significant part of the holiday season. Hosts recognize that holiday memories are made around the dinner table, which is why so much effort goes into planning a delicious meal.

When planning a holiday menu, it's easy to overlook side dishes in favor of the entrée. However, the right side dishes can quickly become the focal point of a holiday meal with family and friends, particularly when they feature unique and irresistible flavors. Such is the case with the following recipe for "Green Beans With Bacon and Pecans" from Lines+Angles. Combining the nutritional value of green beans with the flavor profiles of bacon and pecans, this side dish is sure to please this holiday season.

Green Beans With Bacon and Pecans

Makes 6 servings

4 cups fresh green beans,
rinsed and ends trimmed
2/3 cup bacon, chopped
1/2 cup pecan halves
1 red onion, sliced
2 cloves of garlic, chopped
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper,
to taste
2 tablespoons butter

1. Place green beans in boiling water and cook for about 5 minutes, until crisp and tender.
2. While the beans are cooking, brown the bacon, pecans, sliced onion, and garlic in a large skillet over medium heat.
3. Drain the green beans and add them to the skillet. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté together for 2 to 3 minutes on high, stirring frequently.
4. Transfer green bean mixture to a serving dish. Serve hot.

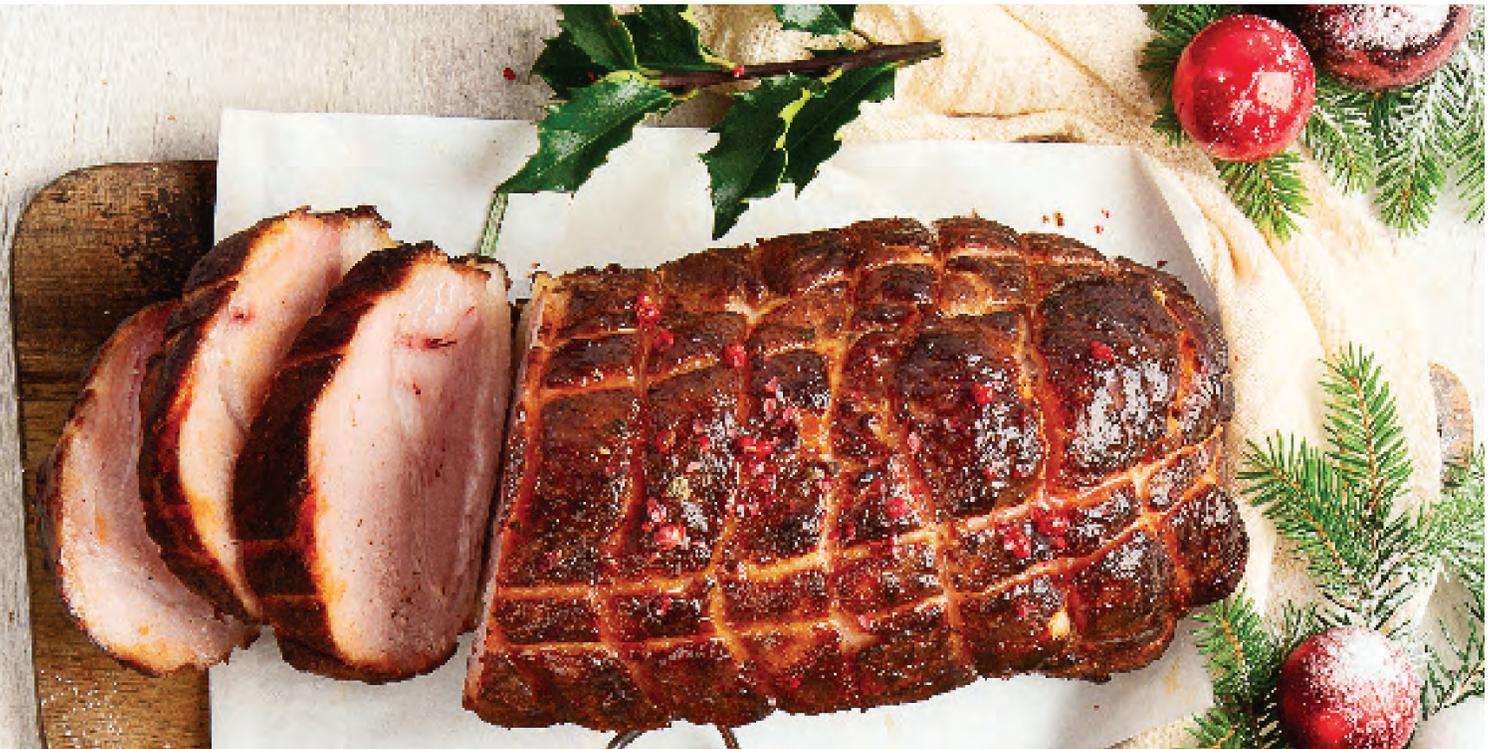
Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Total time: 25 minutes

Difficulty: Easy





Spice up your holiday dinner table this season

Hosting family dinners during the holiday season is an opportunity for hosts to share their spirit and express their love for family and friends. Tastes have evolved over the years, and that evolution has afforded dinner hosts more wiggle room when planning holiday menus. Though traditional staples like ham may never be relegated to the holiday dinner dustbin, cooks can spice things up to make these beloved favorites a little more flavorful.

The following recipe for “Spicy Maple-Glazed Ham,” adapted from chef Jacques Pépin’s “Heart and Soul in the Kitchen” (HarperCollins) for Bonappetit.com, adds a little heat to ham. The former personal chef to French president Charles de Gaulle, Pépin notes that poaching a ham before roasting removes excess salt, ensuring the finished product is tender and juicy.

Spicy Maple-Glazed Ham

Makes 8-12 servings

1 10 lb. cured smoked bone-in ham or 6 lb. cured smoked boneless ham
 1/3 cup ketchup
 1/3 cup pure maple syrup
 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
 2 tablespoons sriracha



Step 1

If one 10-lb. cured smoked bone-in ham or 6-lb. cured smoked boneless ham has a fat cap, score lightly in a crosshatch pattern, spacing cuts about 3/4-inch apart.

Step 2

Transfer ham to a large stockpot and pour in cold water to cover. Cover pot with a lid and bring water to a simmer. Cook, adjusting heat as needed to maintain a simmer, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the ham registers 140 F, 70 to 80 minutes for boneless, 80 to 90 minutes for bone-in. Remove pot from heat and let ham cool in cooking liquid until lukewarm, about 45 minutes.

Step 3

Place a rack in middle of oven; preheat to 400 F. Stir 1/3 cup ketchup, 1/3 cup pure maple syrup, 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, and 2 tablespoons sriracha in a small bowl to combine.

Step 4

Carefully transfer ham to a wire rack set inside a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and pat dry with paper towels; discard cooking liquid or save for another use. Brush ham with about half the glaze. Transfer to oven and bake until glaze is tacky and lightly browned in spots, 30 to 40 minutes. Brush with remaining glaze and continue to bake until glaze is deeply browned, 10 to 15 minutes more.

Step 5

Transfer ham to a cutting board and let rest 15 to 20 minutes before slicing and serving

Do ahead: Ham can be simmered 12 hours ahead. Let cool completely, then transfer ham to a wire rack set inside a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet and chill uncovered. Let sit at room temperature 60 to 90 minutes before glazing and baking.



Enjoy extra time with family thanks to this simple, flavorful appetizer

The holiday season is a special time unlike any other period over the course of a calendar year. A festive atmosphere undoubtedly contributes to the unique, warm vibe of the holiday season.

Increased opportunities to spend time with family and friends also make the holiday season special. Such gatherings may take place at restaurants or other public spaces, but many families also celebrate by welcoming friends and relatives into their homes each December. Hosting is no small task, particularly when hosts must feed a crowd. However, choosing simple recipes, such as this one for “Green Asparagus Wrapped In Roast Beef” courtesy of Lines+Angles, can free up time to socialize with loved ones.



Green Asparagus Wrapped In Roast Beef

Makes 4 servings or 8 appetizers

8 thick asparagus, woody ends removed
 8 slices roast beef, cold, trimmed of excess fat and gristle
 1 cup cottage cheese
 2 scallions, or spring onions, chopped
 Salt
 Freshly ground black pepper

1. Blanch the asparagus spears in a large saucepan of salted, boiling water for 2 to 3 minutes until tender to the bite.
2. Drain and refresh immediately in a large bowl of ice water. Remove from the water after 3 minutes and pat dry. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Spread the slices of roast beef with the cottage cheese. Place an asparagus spear at one end of the slice and roll into a cigar shape, enveloping the asparagus in the center.
4. Arrange on a platter and sprinkle with chopped scallion before serving.

Preparation time: 15 minutes
Total time: 15 minutes
Difficulty: Easy

Give this beloved side a tasty twist *this* *holiday season*

Hosts have free rein when it comes to planning a holiday menu. Despite that freedom, many hosts feel obligated to prepare some holiday season staples their guests will surely expect when they sit down at the dinner table.

Stuffing is a dish many celebrants can't wait to see on the holiday dinner table. For hosts trusted with preparing holiday meals, the beauty of stuffing lies in its versatility. A host of unique ingredients can be added to holiday stuffing without adversely affecting the popularity of this beloved side dish. In fact, adding some unique ingredients can make people love stuffing even more. Such could be the case with this recipe for "Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing" from Lines+Angles.



Pecan-Cherry Bread Stuffing

Makes 8 servings

- 1 loaf crusty white or wheat bread, cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, plus extra for baking dish
- 1 medium yellow onion, peeled and diced
- 2 large celery stalks rinsed, trimmed and diced
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 cup packed dried tart cherries
- 1 cup roughly chopped toasted pecans
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh sage leaves
- 1 tablespoon crushed fennel seed
- Coarse salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh chopped parsley
- 3 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Position oven racks in the middle and lower third of the oven. Arrange bread in a single layer on two rimmed baking sheets. Toast until dry and golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool.

2. Lightly butter a 9 x 13-inch baking dish. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion, celery and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, until onion and celery are softened, about 7 minutes. Add cherries, pecans, sage, and fennel seed; cook, stirring for 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl and season with salt and pepper.

3. Add parsley, eggs and bread to the cherry mixture; stir to combine. Add broth in two additions, stirring until absorbed. Season generously with salt and pepper; transfer stuffing to butter baking dish. Bake on middle rack until the top is deep golden brown, about 25 to 30 minutes. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 50 minutes

Resting time: 5 minutes





Roasted Whole Chicken Stuffed With Oranges, Bulgur and Rosemary

A flavorful fowl *that isn't Thanksgiving turkey*

Turkey may be the first fowl to come to mind when pondering the main course during a holiday meal.

After all, it might seem odd to sit down to a Thanksgiving dinner table and see chicken in place of the traditional turkey. Though turkey may never relinquish its spot as the go-to fowl for Thanksgiving dinner, holiday celebrations in December offer home cooks a little more leeway in regard to the main course. For those who are fond of fowl but prefer to eat turkey just once a year, this recipe for “Christmas Roasted Whole Chicken Stuffed With Oranges, Bulgur and Rosemary” from Lines+Angles can bring something different to the holiday dinner table this year.

Roasted Whole Chicken Stuffed With Oranges, Bulgur and Rosemary

Makes 6 to 8 servings

1½ cups bulgur wheat

1⅔ cups boiling water

1 whole chicken, 3 pounds, trimmed with giblets removed

2 small white onions, cut into wedges

1 large orange, cut into wedges

4 tablespoons butter, softened

2 to 3 rosemary sprigs, roughly torn

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Truss the chicken with butcher's twine; you can also have your butcher do this, or buy a pre-trussed chicken instead.
2. Place the bulgur wheat in a heatproof bowl. Cover with the boiling water, stir once, and cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let sit for 30 minutes until the wheat is tender and has absorbed the water.
3. Sit the chicken in a large roasting pan that's been lined with parchment paper. Scatter the onion and orange wedges around the chicken.

4. Rub the top and sides of the chicken with the softened butter and season with plenty of salt and pepper, including the cavity.
5. Fluff the bulgur wheat with a fork before stuffing it into the main cavity of the chicken. Scatter the rosemary over the chicken.
6. Roast for about 1 hour and 20 minutes, until the juices run clear when the thickest part of the thigh is pierced; it should register at least 175 F on a meat thermometer.
7. Remove from the oven and cover loosely with a sheet of aluminum foil. Leave to rest for at least 10 to 15 minutes before serving.



Dessert is as easy as apple pie

The phrase “as American as apple pie” may lead one to believe that this classic dessert originated somewhere in the Americas. But this beloved dessert actually traces its origins to Europe. In fact, apples aren’t even native to North America, according to experts.

Apple pie is categorized alongside baseball and Coca-Cola® as truly American, but even though it was brought over to the colonies with settlers, it wasn’t until the 20th century that the treat was established as a symbol of national pride. By then, this apple-filled pastry had cemented itself in popular cuisine, and has since been replicated and reimagined in more ways than one might imagine.

Most families have an apple pie recipe that they love. This recipe for “Grandma’s Apple Pie,” courtesy of the Vancouver-based food recipe blog, Spend with Pennies, by Holly Nilsson is one to add to your culinary repertoire.

Grandma’s Apple Pie

Servings: 8 slices

Double Crust Pie Pastry (see note on next page)

1 large egg, beaten

6 to 7 cups apples, peeled and sliced,
about 2 pounds

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1/2 cup granulated sugar

3 tablespoons flour

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

- 1.** Preheat oven to 425 F.
- 2.** Peel apples and cut in quarters. Remove the core and slice apples into 1/4-inch to 1/8-inch thick.
- 3.** In a large bowl, combine apples, lemon juice, sugar, flour, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Toss well to combine and set aside.
- 4.** Roll half of the dough into a 12-inch circle. Line a 9-inch pie plate with the pastry dough. Fill with apple filling.
- 5.** Roll the remaining crust and gently place it over the apple mixture. Seal the edges by gently pinching the top and bottom crusts together. You can fold or decorate the edges by crimping or pressing with a fork. Remove any excess dough.
- 6.** Beat the egg and 2 teaspoons of water or milk. Cut 4 to 5 slits in the top crust to allow steam to escape. Brush with egg mixture and sprinkle with sugar (optional).
- 7.** Place the pie plate on a baking pan lined with parchment paper. This is optional but will catch any drips or spills.
- 8.** Bake at 425 F for 15 minutes, reduce heat to 375 F, and bake an additional 35 to 40 minutes or until the crust is golden and the apples are tender.
- 9.** Cool at least 30 minutes before serving. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream and caramel sauce if desired.

Note: You can use a pre-made refrigerated pie crust for this pie, or try making a homemade pastry with the recipe below.



Flaky Homemade Pie Crust

Makes a double pie crust

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
7 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
7 tablespoons shortening, cubed
 $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ cups ice cold water

1. Combine flour and salt in a large bowl with a whisk.
2. Using a pastry cutter, cut the butter and shortening until the mixture resembles the size of peas.
3. Add ice cold water a tablespoon at a time to one area of the dough and mix with a fork. Move to one side of the bowl and continue adding water just until dough is moistened (you don't want it to be sticky).
4. Once mixed, use your hands to quickly and gently fold over the dough a couple of times. Divide into two balls.
5. Roll each of the balls into a 12-inch circle on a lightly floured surface. Use as needed in your recipe, or wrap and refrigerate to use later.

Master homemade graham cracker crust



Graham cracker crusts complement everything from cheesecakes to cream pies, so having a trusted recipe in one's culinary repertoires ensures home cooks that they can produce delicious treats at any time. Enjoy this version from the baking experts at Betty Crocker Kitchens.

Graham Cracker Crust

Makes one crust for a 9-inch pie

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups finely crushed regular or cinnamon graham crackers (24 squares)
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup butter, melted
3 tablespoons sugar

Heat oven to 350 F. In medium bowl, stir all ingredients until well mixed. Reserve 3 tablespoons crumb mixture for garnishing top of pie before serving, if desired. Press remaining mixture firmly and evenly against bottom and side of pie plate. Bake about 10 minutes or until light brown; cool on cooling rack. Fill as directed in desired pie recipe.

Kitchen tip: Graham cracker crust pairs well with any number of easy cream pies. As a fast treat, prepare instant vanilla pudding according to package directions. Pour into prepared graham cracker crust, and add slices of fresh strawberries and bananas. Top the pie with whipped topping or homemade whipped cream. Chill and serve.



Stuffed Mushrooms

Makes 28 servings

Olive oil, to coat baking sheet

28 mushrooms (2½ inches in diameter), stemmed

½ cup butter (1 stick)

1 small onion, minced

2 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced

¾ cup Italian breadcrumbs

½ cup Romano cheese, grated

3 tablespoons fresh Italian parsley, chopped

Salt, to taste

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 F. Drizzle olive oil on baking sheet and coat thoroughly.
- 2.** Gently clean the mushrooms and remove stems. Finely chop stems. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat. Add stems, onion and garlic, and sauté until stems and onions are soft and garlic is fragrant.
- 3.** In a mixing bowl, add bread crumbs, cheese and parsley. Season with salt and pepper and stir to combine. Add sautéed mixture to bread crumb mixture and mix well.
- 4.** Spoon filling mixture into mushroom caps. Arrange on prepared baking sheet, stuffed side up. Bake about 20 to 25 minutes, or until the mushrooms are tender and the tops are golden. Cool for several minutes before serving. Arrange on serving tray or platter. Serve.

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Total time: 50 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Impress guests with this flavorful appetizer

Appetizers can make a strong first impression when eating at a restaurant. Indeed, a flavorful appetizer can give diners a taste of what's to come throughout the rest of the meal, creating a sense of anticipation that will linger all the way to the last bite.

Appetizers may be most associated with restaurants, but holiday hosts can go the extra mile and prepare some flavorful apps at home as well. As hosts prepare to welcome loved ones into their home this holiday season, they can treat guests with these "Stuffed Mushrooms" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Something unique for a holiday season get-together

Traditional holiday fare like cookies, turkey and, of course, pie, has a place on any dinner table during family gatherings in December. But it never hurts to try something new, particularly in an era when the average person's culinary horizons have been greatly expanded.

When planning menus this holiday season, home cooks can consider this recipe for "Smoked Salmon Rolls With Fresh Cheese for Christmas" from Lines+Angles. Whether served on a tray as hosts walk around a holiday party or as an appetizer during a sit-down meal, these salmon rolls are sure to be a hit among friends and family.



Smoked Salmon Rolls With Fresh Cheese

Makes 8 servings

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 medium eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 to 3 tablespoons canola oil, for frying
- 1 cup low-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 small bunch dill, finely chopped, plus extra
- 2 to 3 tablespoons hot water, plus extra as needed
- 1 3/4 cups smoked salmon slices
- 1/2 lemon, juiced

- 1.** Blend together the flour, eggs, milk, salt, butter, and dill in a food processor until smooth. Pour into a jug.
- 2.** Heat a little oil in a non-stick frying or crepe pan set over medium heat until hot. Add a small ladle of batter to the pan and tilt with a circular motion so that the batter coats the surface evenly.
- 3.** Cook for 1 to 2 minutes until golden underneath. Flip and cook for a further minute or so. Remove to a plate and repeat the process using a little more oil for each crepe.

- 4.** Beat cream cheese and ricotta cheese with dill and 2 to 3 tablespoons hot water in a bowl until creamy and spreadable, adding more water as needed. Season to taste with salt.
- 5.** Spread over cooked pancakes and top with smoked salmon slices. Drizzle with lemon juice. Roll up into cigar shapes and cut into bite-size pieces. Serve with a dill garnish.

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Total time: 40 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

A crowd pleaser to make *this holiday season*

Holiday hosts recognize it's not always so easy to feed a crowd. That pressure may be even more notable come the holiday season, when food is such an integral component of gatherings with family and friends.

It may be impossible to please everyone all of the time, but few can resist a hearty comfort food like baked ziti. That makes the dish an ideal option for holiday hosts tasked with feeding a crowd. This holiday season, hosts welcoming loved ones into their homes can consider this easily prepared recipe for "Baked Ziti with Chicken and Cheese" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Baked Ziti With Chicken and Cheese

Makes 4 to 6 servings

16 ounces dry ziti pasta
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
1 pound ground chicken
8 cups spaghetti sauce
Butter, for pan
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Salt, to taste

1. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add ziti pasta, and cook according to package instructions until al dente, about 8 minutes; drain well.

2. In a large skillet, brown chopped onion and ground chicken over medium heat. Add spaghetti sauce, and simmer for about 15 minutes.

3. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Coat a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with butter. Drizzle sauce in the bottom of the baking



dish and arrange the ziti on top. Ladle remaining sauce over the ziti. Top with mozzarella cheese. Gently toss to completely coat the ziti with sauce and cheese. Sprinkle grated Parmesan cheese over the top.

4. Bake for 30 minutes, or until the cheese melts and the pasta is heated through.

Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 55 minutes

Feed a crowd *this holiday season*

Come the holiday season, chances are you'll need to plan meals that can accommodate a few extra people who will be seated at the dinner table. Certain meals are tailor-made to feed a crowd, and utilizing recipes that can be prepared in a slow cooker allows cooks to free up time to handle other tasks while waiting for guests to arrive.

Enjoy this recipe for "Stuffed Chicken Breasts" from "Crock•Pot 365 Year-Round Recipes" (Publications International, Ltd) by the Crock•Pot Kitchens. Multiply the recipe as needed for the number of guests.



Stuffed Chicken Breasts

Serves 6

- 6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 8 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
- 3 cups chopped fresh spinach leaves
- 1/3 cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 1 teaspoon minced lemon peel
- 1 teaspoon dried basil, oregano or mint
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 can (15 ounces) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1/2 cup all-cured olives (If using pitted olives, add to the slow cooker in the final hour of cooking.)

- 1.** Place chicken breast between 2 pieces of plastic wrap. Using tenderizer mallet or back of skillet, pound breast until about 1/4-inch thick. Repeat with remaining chicken.
- 2.** Combine feta, spinach, sun-dried tomatoes, lemon peel, basil, garlic powder, and pepper in a medium bowl.
- 3.** Lay pounded chicken, smooth side down, on work surface. Place about 2 tablespoons feta mixture on wide end of breast. Roll tightly. Repeat with remaining chicken.
- 4.** Place rolled chicken, seam side down, in slow cooker. Top with diced tomatoes with juice and olives. Cover; cook on low 5 1/2 to 6 hours or on high 4 hours. Serve with polenta.



Hearty vegan chili *for* *chilly days*

People choose to adhere to a vegetarian or vegan diet for various reasons. Some people avoid animal products because of ethics, while others want to control their weight with low-calorie foods. Still others may have food allergies or intolerances that make a vegetable-based diet their best option.

Cooking vegetarian or vegan can introduce a person to a wide variety of new foods and flavors. That's why even people who eat meat like to periodically experiment with vegetarian or vegan foods.

When the weather starts to cool, soups and stews become staples of many people's diets. With this recipe for "Four Bean Chili" from "Vegan Cooking for Beginners" (Publications International, Ltd.) by the PIL editors, home cooks can experiment with a meatless chili that doesn't skimp on flavor even if it isn't brimming with beef, pork or lamb.

Vegan Four Bean Chili

Makes 8 to 10 servings

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 2 tablespoons packed dark brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce
- 1 can (15 ounces) small white beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) light kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) dark kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 can (15 ounces) pinto beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup vegetable broth
- 1 can (4 ounces) diced mild green chiles
- 1 ounce unsweetened baking chocolate, chopped
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar.

Heat oil in large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onions, carrots and bell pepper; cook and stir 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add garlic, tomato paste, brown sugar, chili powder, cumin, oregano and salt; cook and stir 1 minute.

Stir in tomatoes, tomato sauce, beans, broth, chiles, and chocolate; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in vinegar.

Chili is even better served with cornbread. Make batter while the vegetables are cooking in step one and bake it while the chili is simmering.

Vegan Cornbread

Makes 12 servings

- 3 tablespoons boiling water
- 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed
- 1¹/₄ cups all-purpose flour
- ³/₄ cup yellow cornmeal
- ¹/₃ cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1¹/₄ cups plain unsweetened almond or soymilk
- ¹/₄ cup vegetable oil

Preheat oven to 400 F. Spray 8-inch square baking dish or pan with nonstick cooking spray. Combine boiling water and flaxseed in small bowl; let stand until cool.

Combine flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, and salt in large bowl; mix well. Whisk almond milk and oil in medium bowl until well blended. Add to flour mixture with flaxseed mixture; stir just until dry ingredients are moistened. Pour batter into prepared baking dish.

Bake 25 minutes or until top is browned and toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.



Meat substitutions for vegetarian dining



As of 2022, around
22%
of the world's
population are
vegetarians

People embrace vegetarian diets for a multitude of reasons. As of 2022, around 22 percent of the world's population are vegetarians, according to research by Cook Unity. In addition, NSF, a global public health organization, says 88 percent of food manufacturers expect a surge in plant-based product demand in the years to come.

Making the transition to a vegetarian lifestyle can be made easier by doing it gradually and investigating foods that can substitute for meat in popular recipes. Pretty much anything can be made with plant-based ingredients, including burgers. **Here are some plant-based options to include in vegetarian dining.**

Mushrooms

Mushrooms can add a meaty taste because they are rich and earthy. Mushrooms also are flavorful and filling. Mushrooms can be the main ingredient in stroganoff or ground up to make burger meat.

Tofu/Tempeh

Tofu is a popular meat substitute. This soy-based protein comes in different firmness levels, and it takes on the flavor of sauces and accompanying ingredients. Tofu can be used in stir-fries, smoothies, tacos, and more. Tempeh is a tofu-like item made from fermented soybeans.

Seitan

People who avoid soy can consider seitan, which is a vital wheat gluten product. It has a texture similar to chicken and takes on seasonings and spices well. Try marinating and grilling seitan as you would other meats.

Beans

Part of the legume family, beans are high in fiber as well as vitamins and minerals. Beans can be used as a substitute for ground meat in chili or quesadillas.

Chickpeas

Another legume, chickpeas offer more protein than many other legumes. They can be added to salads, or whipped into hummus as an alternative to salad dressings and mayonnaise. Chickpeas also can be mashed and formed into balls for falafel, or baked or fried as tasty snacks.

Jackfruit

Fans of pulled pork can give jackfruit a try. This tropical fruit mimics the texture of barbecue. It's almost impossible to tell the difference when the fruit is slathered in sauce.

Lentils

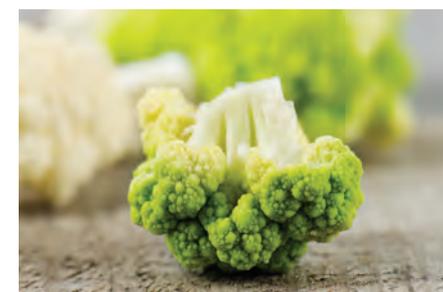
Lentils are a staple in plant-based diets. They are packed with protein and boast an earthy texture.

Eggplant

Eggplant is versatile and has a rich, meaty flavor profile. It can replace meat in burgers or be mashed into meatballs.

Cauliflower

From crusts to rice substitutes, cauliflower is revolutionizing various normally starch-based dishes. However, when cooked the right way, cauliflower also can be used in lieu of meat in dishes.



Homemade gluten-free dinner rolls



Gluten-free Dinner Rolls

Makes 18 rolls

- 4 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2 cups warm milk (about 110 F)
- 2 tablespoons active dry yeast
- 3 cups gluten-free all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons xanthan gum
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 extra-large eggs
- 1/4 cup neutral-flavored oil such as rice bran or canola
- 2 teaspoons vinegar, preferably apple cider
- Melted unsalted butter for brushing
- Tapioca flour for dusting

Holiday dinners vary depending on the household, but certain staples seem to pop up no matter where you sit down to enjoy your holiday meal. Dinner rolls are one such staple, as few things supplement a hearty holiday meal better than freshly baked homemade dinner rolls.

Men and women with gluten allergies may want to avoid traditional dinner rolls, but holiday hosts can take steps to ensure everyone gets to enjoy dinner rolls regardless of their dietary restrictions. The following recipe for “Dinner Rolls” from Jeanne Sauvage’s “Gluten-Free Baking” (Chronicle Books) is a gluten-free version of a beloved holiday staple.

Brush 18 standard muffin cups (one 12-cup pan and one 6-cup pan) with melted butter and dust with tapioca flour.

In a small bowl, whisk 1 tablespoon of the sugar into the warm milk. Whisk in the yeast to dissolve. Set aside to proof. The mixture will get foamy. If your kitchen is warm, the mixture will foam quickly, so watch it to make sure it does not overflow the bowl.

In a medium bowl, mix together the all-purpose flour, xanthan gum, baking powder, salt, and remaining 3 tablespoons sugar.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the eggs on medium speed until foamy, about 3 minutes. Add the oil and beat for 2 more minutes. Reduce the speed to low, add the vinegar and beat to combine. Add the yeast mixture and beat to mix. Add the flour mixture and beat to combine, then increase the speed to medium-high and beat for 3 minutes longer.

Distribute the dough equally among the prepared muffin cups and fill them about three-quarters full. With a sharp knife that has been dipped in tapioca flour, cut a deep slash in the top of each roll. Dip the knife in flour before each cut, and don’t worry if a little extra tapioca flour is left on top of the rolls.

Preheat the oven to 375 F.

Let the dough stand in a warm, draft-free place to rise until doubled in bulk, about 40 minutes.

Brush the top of each roll with melted butter. Bake until the tops are a nice golden brown, about 20 minutes. If they start to brown too quickly, loosely tent the rolls with aluminum foil. Remove the rolls to wire racks to cool. If you are serving them immediately, it’s nice to put them in a tea towel-lined blanket to keep warm.

Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.



Offer a healthy breakfast to holiday guests

Holiday entertaining often involves hosting overnight guests. That means that breakfast and other meals will be expected.

Overnight oats are nutritious and easy options for any day of the week, making them a great breakfast for holiday guests.

As the name suggests, overnight oats are prepared the night before and then the flavors marinate with the oats for several hours, producing a rich and creamy breakfast in the morning. Oats are filling on their own, and “Matcha, Coconut and Cacao Overnight Oats” have the added benefit of green tea powder (matcha), which not only turns the dish into a festive green color, but also adds antioxidants, vitamins and an energy boost. Enjoy this recipe, courtesy of “Rainbow Bowls” (Sourcebooks) by Niki Webster.

Matcha, Coconut and Cacao Overnight Oats

Serves 1

- 5 tablespoons oats of your choice
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 6 1/2 ounces plant-based milk, plus extra if needed
- 1/2 teaspoon matcha powder
- 2 tablespoons coconut yogurt
- 1 tablespoon cacao nibs or dairy-free chocolate chips
- 1 to 2 teaspoons maple syrup

To make the overnight oats, add the oats, vanilla and milk to a mason jar or bowl and mix to combine. Cover and leave to soak overnight in the fridge.

Remove the oats from the fridge and stir in the matcha, yogurt, cacao nibs, and maple syrup.

Spoon into a bowl and add more plant-based milk to loosen if needed. Add toppings of your choice and enjoy.

Topping options:

- Chopped pistachios
- Berries
- Seeds



Mushroom Sausage Frittata

Makes 4 to 6 servings

- 1 tablespoon good-quality olive oil
- 2 cups chopped smoked sausage
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and minced
- 8 fresh eggs
- 3¹/₂ tablespoons heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, grated

- 1.** Preheat oven broiler.
- 2.** Heat the oil in a 10-inch nonstick, ovenproof skillet. Add sausage and sauté until it begins to brown, about 3 minutes. Add mushrooms and sauté until golden, about 3 additional minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
- 3.** Combine the eggs, heavy cream, salt, and pepper in a blender; process until frothy. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet with the sausage mixture and cook, undisturbed, until the sides and bottom are set but center is loose, about 4 minutes.
- 4.** Sprinkle cheese over the top and place skillet under broiler and cook until mixture is just set on top and cooked through, about 3 to 4 minutes. Cool 2 minutes, slice and serve.

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Total time: 25 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Be your best brunch host *this holiday season*

Much is made about the main course during a holiday meal, and for good reason. Food features prominently during the holiday season, and many a lasting memory is made around the family dinner table each December.

Though it's impossible to exaggerate the importance of the main course during a holiday celebration with family and friends, savvy hosts, especially those welcoming overnight guests into their homes, recognize that a sit-down dinner isn't the only opportunity to show off their culinary skills. When hosting overnight guests, a relaxing homemade brunch can make for the perfect way for hosts and their guests to ease into a day. Hosts looking to plan a simple, flavorful holiday brunch can utilize this recipe for "Mushroom Sausage Frittata" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

5 Fun gift exchange ideas



Gift-giving is a significant component of the holiday season. Families can embrace traditional gift-giving, but those who want to add a touch of whimsy to gatherings with loved ones can consider these five creative and fun ways to exchange gifts.

1. Play the plastic wrap game.

To exchange small stocking stuffer gifts, compile gift cards, cash, small toys, candy, and even some larger gifts (all participants can chip in and one person shops for the gifts). The designated person in charge begins rolling up the gifts in the plastic, adding one every few rolls. Turning the ball 90 degrees while wrapping helps make a more round, finished gift ball. To play, the person with the ball

puts on oven mitts and tries to unwrap as much as they can to access the gifts, while the person to the left is attempting to roll doubles on dice. When doubles are made, that person passes the dice to the left and starts his or her own attempts to get at the gifts in the plastic ball. The game ends when all the gifts are revealed, whether everyone has had a chance to unwrap or not.

2. Plan a white elephant gift exchange.

A white elephant exchange is like a secret grab bag. Everyone brings a wrapped gift, and then takes turns choosing a gift based on the number they've been given. When the gift is chosen, the person opens it. The next player can select a fresh gift or steal one of the presents that's already been opened.

3. Host a make-and-take craft party.

With this type of exchange, participants will engage in some form of crafting for the duration of the event, whether it's pottery, painting, epoxy resin pouring, or even knit crafts. At the end of the night everyone can swap their creations with another or keep their own crafts as gifts.

4. Give the gift of a group outing.

Instead of exchanging material gifts, focus on sharing experiences with friends and family. A trip to watch a sports game or a theater performance can be an excellent way to spend time together, and something a person may not be inclined to do on his or her own. Certain venues will offer discounts on group tickets, so everyone can pool their resources.

5. Host a DIY cookie and cocoa exchange.

Cookies, cocoa and the holidays are a perfect combination. A gift exchange where participants supply ingredients for these sweet treats, share their favorite recipes and then put together the finished products can make for an entertaining and festive afternoon. Each person can fill a cookie tin with baked cookies to take home and mason jars filled with homemade hot cocoa mix and marshmallows can be an additional gift to enjoy later on a chilly evening.

There are plenty of fun ways to exchange gifts during the holiday season.

Holiday Games

The holidays bring together friends, neighbors and family members to celebrate some of the most festive days of the year. Although celebrants often incorporate traditions they hold dear this time of year, downtime provides an opportunity to embrace new games and entertainment ideas as well.

The following are some fun games to play this holiday season that can help to break the ice and keep everyone laughing.



Reindeer Games

Everyone knows that Rudolph wanted to have fun and participate in “reindeer games,” but he was left on the sidelines. Inspired by the tune, everyone can participate in reindeer games at your home. These types of games can include tests of endurance and dexterity, like fruitcake-eating contests, running races or doing hurdle competitions in the yard.

Candy Cane Home Runs

Participants can see how well they can launch a marshmallow into the outfield by hitting it with a candy cane taking the place of the baseball bat. Each participant gets three swings. The person with the most home runs wins.

Guess the Gift

In this game, party hosts wrap up five oddly shaped gifts specifically for the game (the gifts may be oddly shaped or just the wrapping as a decoy). Players take turns trying to guess what is inside and mark down their answers on sheets. One by one the gifts are revealed. If anyone guesses the gift, it is given as a prize. If more than one person guesses a gift, come up with a fun way to break the tie, such as rock, paper, scissors or thumb wrestling.

Present Stackers

This requires keeping a collection of oddly shaped gifts at the ready. Game participants try to stack the presents as tall as they can without them toppling over.

Christmas Karaoke

Singing traditional carols and popular holiday tunes is not uncommon come December. In this competitive version of karaoke, singers have to keep on singing, even when the lyrics get turned off or covered to test their true knowledge of these songs.

Fishing for Fun

Hang strings on the straight ends of candy canes to fashion fishing poles, with the curved ends serving as the “hooks.” Participants try to “fish” smaller candy canes out of a bowl and see how many they can reel in.

The “No L” Game

The game referee has a list of a few categories (i.e., food, sports, colors, cars, etc.) and players are split into a few teams. When the category is called, the teams have to jot down as many words as they can pertaining to the category that do not have a letter “L” in them before a timer runs out. These are just a few festive ways to have fun with friends or family members during holiday gatherings.



The best pumpkins for pie (and other desserts)

Beginning in early fall, pumpkins begin to arrive at farmer's markets, supermarkets, nurseries, and fall harvest festivals. Pumpkins are versatile in that they make colorful fall home decorations, but also can be utilized in all sorts of recipes. In fact, pumpkins are a type of winter squash.

While some people may be quick to think that the larger the pumpkin the better it is for baking up delicious treats, that's actually not the case. According to the gardening resource Gardener's Path, although most pumpkin cultivars are edible, the big pumpkins carved into jack-o-lanterns for Halloween tend to be pretty bland, watery and stringy. They've been hybridized to produce a large Halloween-friendly shape, not for flavor. Those traits are not ideal for a delicious pumpkin pie or pumpkin chocolate chip oatmeal cookies.

The best pumpkins for purees used in recipes are those that were specially cultivated for cooking. When shopping for pumpkins for your next recipe (if you're opting for fresh, rather than canned puree), select one of the following:

- **Cinderella**
- **Baby Bear**
- **Early Sweet Sugar Pie**
- **Dickinson**
- **Jarrahdale**
- **Galeux d'Elsines**
- **Orange Smoothie**
- **Small Sugar, among others**

Once you've selected your perfect cooking pumpkins, it's time to whip up a pumpkin pie. Enjoy this recipe, courtesy of McCormick, which can be served anytime from Halloween through Christmas.



Classic Pumpkin Pie

Serves 8

Pastry for 9-inch pie crust
2 eggs, well beaten
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons McCormick® Pumpkin Pie Spice
1 tablespoon flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin
(or equivalent in fresh puree)
1 teaspoon McCormick
All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 can (12 ounces) evaporated milk

Preheat oven to 425 F.

Line 9-inch pie plate with pie crust.

Mix eggs, brown sugar, pumpkin pie spice, flour, and salt in medium bowl until smooth. Stir in pumpkin and vanilla. Gradually add evaporated milk, mixing well. Pour into pie crust.

Bake 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 F. Bake 40 minutes longer or until knife inserted in center comes out clean.

Serve warm or cold. Garnish with whipped cream and sprinkle with additional pumpkin pie spice, if desired. Store covered in refrigerator.

A Hot Punch

to warm up this holiday season

Images of warm family gatherings dominate millions of people's holiday season memories. But the warmth inside a home come the holiday season does not mean it's not cold outside. Indeed, snow-filled landscapes and/or temperatures below freezing are not uncommon come late December. As the mercury drops outside, families can warm up inside with a batch of "Hot Holiday Punch" courtesy of Lines+Angles.



Hot Holiday Punch

Makes 14 servings

16 cups water, divided
 5 cups cranberries, fresh or frozen,
 plus extra for garnish
 2½ cups granulated sugar
 ½ cup red hots cinnamon candies
 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 12 whole cloves
 3 cinnamon sticks
 1 lemon, sliced
 Cheesecloth

- 1.** In a large saucepan, set over medium-high heat, bring 1 quart of water and cranberries to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 8 to 10 minutes or until the cranberries begin to pop. Drain, reserving liquid and cranberries. Put cranberries through a fine mesh strainer or food mill. Set aside.
- 2.** In a Dutch oven or large pot, combine sugar, red-hots, lemon juice, cranberry liquid and cranberry pulp, and remaining 3 quarts of water.

- 3.** Place cloves and cinnamon sticks in a double thickness of cheesecloth. Tie with string to form a bag; add to pan with the punch. Bring to a boil; stir until sugar and candies are dissolved. Discard spice bag. Strain juice through a fine mesh strainer. Serve hot with lemon slices and cranberries.

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Total time: 35 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Set the tone for a holiday party with this beloved seasonal beverage

Eggnog

Holiday hosts also do much to promote the festive spirit of the season. Hosts often go to great lengths to ensure holiday guests enjoy their visits, and that even extends to the food and drinks they serve the people they welcome into their homes. Many celebrants would insist no holiday season get-together is complete without eggnog, a classic beverage that's most popular in December. This holiday season, hosts can treat their guests to this recipe for "Eggnog" courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Eggnog

Makes 2 Servings

2 ounces brandy or cognac
 2 ounces dark rum, plus more for sugar rim
 1 cup eggnog, prepared
 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon
 1/2 teaspoon light brown sugar
 2 sticks cinnamon, for garnish (optional)
 2 pods star anise, for garnish (optional)
 Shortbread or gingerbread cookies, for garnish (optional)

1. In a cocktail shaker with ice, add the brandy, rum and eggnog together, cover and shake.

2. Add the nutmeg, cinnamon and sugar to a small plate and stir around to combine. Wet the rims of 2 glasses with rum. Roll the rims of the glasses in the spices to coat.

3. Strain the eggnog mixture into the two glasses. Garnish with cinnamon sticks, star anise pods and festive shortbread cookies, if desired.



Warm and wow guests with homemade hot mulled apple cider

When hosting friends and family at home, it's understandable that hosts direct so much of their focus to the foods they plan to serve. The main course is often the focal point and most memorable aspect of a dinner party, and that's true whether the get-together is a backyard barbecue, a holiday meal with the family or a formal affair with colleagues.

Food might be a focal point, but guests also will need something to drink. Traditional spirits like wine and cocktails are the standard, but hosts who want to get a little creative should not hesitate to do so. When choosing a special beverage, timing is everything. Guests will want to cool down on warm summer evenings, so something cold and refreshing can make for the perfect signature cocktail. When hosting on nights when the mercury has dropped, a warm beverage can heat up guests in a matter of minutes. On such nights, hosts can serve this version of "Hot Mulled (Sherried) Apple Cider" courtesy of Laurey Masterton's "The Fresh Honey Cookbook" (Storey). One added benefit to Masterton's recipe is it can produce a welcoming winter aroma, helping hosts establish a warm ambiance for the festivities.



Hot Mulled (Sherried) Apple Cider

Serves 16

- 1 gallon apple cider
- 1 orange, unpeeled, cut into slices
- 1/4 cup whole cloves
- 4 sticks cinnamon
- 1/4 cup honey, preferably cranberry honey
- 1 cup sherry (optional)

1. Combine the cider, orange slices, cloves, cinnamon, and honey in a large pot over medium heat. If you are picky about things floating in your cider, make a little bundle out of cheesecloth and place the cinnamon and cloves inside before adding to the cider. I like to chew on cloves, so I just toss everything in.

Bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer over low heat for an hour or so to spread these lovely winter aromas around your home.

2. If you're serving it to adults, add the sherry. It might make everyone want to go sledding!



A classic cocktail toasts the season with a twist

A whiskey sour is a classic that can be given a makeover with some ingredients that are tailor-made for the holiday season. In this recipe for “Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour,” courtesy of the editors of *American Lifestyle*, fragrant and flavorful fruit and herbs blend well with the tartness of the drink.

Rosemary Cranberry Whiskey Sour

Makes 4

Rosemary Simple Syrup:

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary

Cocktail:

6 ounces whiskey
3 ounces sour mix
16 ounces cranberry juice
Cranberries, for garnish
Rosemary sprigs, for garnish

1. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the sugar, water and rosemary. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, creating a syrup. Remove from the heat, strain to remove the rosemary, and refrigerate.

2. Fill a shaker with ice, and pour in the whiskey, sour mix, simple syrup, and cranberry juice. Shake, and pour into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with cranberries and rosemary before serving.

Tip: This recipe is great without the whiskey, as a classy, adult “zero proof” drink. You can make a big batch as a lovely punch — leave some cranberries and rosemary on the side for garnish.

Decorations

add a lot to holiday festivities

It's easy to recognize the holiday season has arrived. Holiday-centric sights and sounds abound this time of year. In fact, the arrival of decorations in stores seemingly comes earlier and earlier each year, perhaps to accommodate people's undying enthusiasm for the holiday season.

Decorating a home or business for the holidays involves some familiar items, but this is a time of year when people can truly make the holidays their own. With that in mind, here are some considerations for decorations and other trinkets that can add a lot of cheer to this already festive time of year.



• **Wreaths:** are one of the simplest ways to dress up windows, doors or other areas of a home. These decorative items can be made from various materials. Evergreen boughs are one of the more traditional, but there's also colorful garlands, flowers or even ribbon that can be wrapped to make a wreath.

• **Lights:** Lights are integral parts of both Christian and Jewish holiday celebrations. Lights adorn homes to represent Christ being the Light of the World. In Judaism, the lighting of eight candles for Chanukah represents how a small amount of Temple oil miraculously burned for eight days and nights. Filling a home with artificial lights or candles adds a festive touch to dark winter evenings.

• **Advent calendar:** While it is called an advent calendar and traditionally ties into the time preceding Christmas, anyone can utilize an advent "countdown" calendar as they anticipate the arrival of Christmas Day. There are different iterations of advent calendars, from chocolate calendars to decorative ones featuring doors behind which there are whimsical figurines. Kids may even want to get involved in making homemade calendars.

• **Poinsettias:** Poinsettias come in a variety of colors, but red is the hue of choice for holiday decorating. Perhaps surprisingly, poinsettias are tropical plants. The "flowers" you see on the plants aren't flowers at all. They're modified leaves called bracts. If you take good care of poinsettias, they even can be planted outdoors for the summer.



• **Boughs and branches:** One of the easiest ways to add a festive touch to a home for the holidays is with items that likely can be scavenged from outdoors. Take a hike and gather some evergreen boughs, tree branches, pine cones, and holly sprigs, which can be turned into garlands, wreaths or centerpieces. With a little white speckle paint, you can give them a snow-covered look.

Decorating for the holidays is a popular tradition and one that can make spaces even more festive to enjoy. Various items can enhance the ambiance and set the scene for the joyous weeks to come.



Show guests this much maligned staple is a *tasty treat*

Few foods garner the types of responses generated by the mere mention of fruitcake, which drives many holiday celebrants to run for the hills. But fruitcake may not deserve its reputation, particularly when individuals brave enough to prepare it serve it covered in a sugary glaze. Such is the case with this recipe for “Gluten-Free Fruitcake With Sugar Glaze” courtesy of Lines+Angles.



Gluten-Free Fruitcake With Sugar Glaze

Serves 16

For the cake:

4 ounces golden raisins
2 ounces chopped candied orange peel
8 ounces candied cherries, quartered
6 ounces raisins
3½ tablespoons sherry
4 ounces butter
1 cup sugar
1 pinch salt
1 pinch grated nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground mixed spice
3 eggs, beaten
1 cup self-raising gluten-free flour
6 ounces chopped almonds, blanched

For the icing:

1 cup confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons water

1. For the cake: Place all the fruit in a bowl with the sherry, stir well, cover and leave to stand overnight.

2. Heat the oven to 325 F. Grease a loaf pan and line the base with parchment paper.

3. Beat the butter with the sugar, salt and spices in a mixing bowl until light and creamy, then gradually beat in the eggs.

4. Gently fold in the flour, followed by the soaked fruits and almonds, stirring well.

5. Spoon into the pan and bake for 2 to 2¼ hours until cooked through. Leave to cool in the pan.

6. For the icing: Mix the sugar with a little water, adding a little at a time, until it is thick and smooth.

7. Spread the icing on top of the cake, allowing it to run down the sides. Leave to set.

Preparation & Cooking time:

2 hours and 45 minutes

Resting time: 12 hours



Food and family fun *this holiday season*

Families have their own unique holiday traditions, and such customs help to make this time of year so special. Baking together as a family is a popular holiday tradition that rewards everyone with some tasty treats after a fun-filled day in the kitchen.

Incorporating a holiday theme into baked goods can add to the fun factor, particularly for children. Families looking to mix fun and food this holiday season can try their hands at this recipe for “Chocolate Reindeer Cupcakes” courtesy of Lines+Angles.

Chocolate Reindeer Cupcakes

Makes 12 servings

For Chocolate Cupcakes:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup butter, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup superfine sugar
- 3 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cups self-rising flour
- 2 tablespoons cocoa powder

For Chocolate Frosting:

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, softened
- $3\frac{1}{3}$ cups confectioners' sugar
- $\frac{7}{8}$ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 4 to 6 tablespoons milk

For Decorations:

- 12 sets candy eyes
- 12 red gumdrops
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

For Chocolate Cupcakes:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Line muffin tin wells with 12 paper cupcake liners.
2. In a large mixing bowl, using an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating after each addition. Gradually add flour and cocoa powder, mixing until all ingredients are incorporated.
3. Spoon the batter into the paper liners. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until tops are springy to the touch. Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove cupcakes from pan and allow to cool completely before decorating.

For Chocolate Frosting:

1. In a large bowl, cream butter until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar, cocoa and vanilla. Add milk one tablespoon at a

time until frosting reaches the desired consistency. Frost each cupcake using an offset spatula.

To Decorate:

1. Arrange candied eyes and gumdrop nose on frosted cupcake.
2. Melt semisweet chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water. Cool slightly, and transfer to a pastry bag fitted with small plain round tip. Pipe antlers with chocolate on parchment or waxed paper; place in the refrigerator or freezer and allow to set.
3. Once the chocolate has set, carefully remove antlers from paper and insert in cupcake. Serve.

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, 5 minutes

Difficulty: Medium



Add a new offering to your Christmas cookie lineup

The holiday season doubles as cookie season. Indeed, there's no shortage of baking opportunities in December. Various cookies make the rounds, and if you are tasked with bringing cookies to a function, you might be interested in something a little different.

"Santa's Whiskers" likely get their name from the coconut on these cookies, which resemble Santa's beard. Maraschino cherries add some jolly red to the cookies as well, making them perfect for Christmas. Try this recipe from "Butter, Flour, Sugar, Joy" (Sourcebooks) by Danielle Kartes.

Santa's Whiskers

20 to 24 cookies

- 1½ cups confectioner's sugar
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 12-ounce jar pitted maraschino cherries, strained and stemmed
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon almond extract
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sweetened shredded coconut

- 1.** In a stand mixer, with a hand mixer, or by hand, cream the sugar and butter until light and fluffy.
- 2.** Add the cherries, vanilla, almond extract, and salt. Mix thoroughly. Fold into the flour and mix until it forms a crumbly but moist dough.
- 3.** Lay a 16-inch sheet of parchment paper onto the counter. Sprinkle 1 cup of the coconut on the center in a loose rectangle, making sure it does not reach the edge of the parchment. Place the cookie dough on top, flattening a bit with your fingers, and sprinkle the remaining coconut over the top of the dough.

- 4.** Form the dough into a 12- to 14-inch log, about 3 inches thick. Evenly press the coconut around the log and roll to make the log an even cylinder.
 - 5.** Roll the parchment up with the dough inside and twist the ends. Chill for at least 2 hours or overnight.
 - 6.** Preheat oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Slice cookies in ¼ - to ½ -inch rounds, place on the prepared baking sheet, about 2 inches apart, and bake 12 to 15 minutes.
- Allow to cool before serving. Store in an airtight container.

Craft an edible holiday classic

from the comforts of home

As families prepare to celebrate the holiday season, they can work together to create this impressive, and edible, "Gingerbread House" courtesy of Lines+Angles.



Gingerbread House

Makes 8 servings or 1 house

For the house:

3¹/₄ cups all-purpose flour,
plus extra as needed
3 tablespoons cornstarch
1 tablespoon ground ginger
3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup unsalted butter,
at room temperature
3/4 cup molasses, warmed
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the frosting:

2 cups confectioners' sugar,
plus extra as needed
1¹/₂ tablespoons meringue powder
1 to 2 tablespoons warm water

To decorate:

Assorted colorful candies, sugared chocolate candies, round peppermint candies, candy canes, etc.

- 1. For the gingerbread:** Combine the flour, cornstarch, spices, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir well and set aside.
- 2.** Beat the softened butter with the molasses and vanilla in a separate mixing bowl until pale and creamy, about 2 to 3 minutes.
- 3.** Beat in the flour mixture in 4 additions, mixing well between additions until you have a rough dough; add more flour as needed to form a stiff dough.
- 4.** Turn out and knead briefly. Shape into a round, wrap in parchment paper, and chill for 2 hours.
- 5.** After chilling, preheat the oven to 325 F. Grease and line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.
- 6.** Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Roll out to about 0.333" thickness on a lightly floured surface.
- 7.** Cut out two rectangles approximately 4.5" x 4" for the roof. Cut out 2 pointed rectangles approximately 5" at their

tallest points and 3.5" wide at the base; these will be the front and back of the house as per the image. Make sure that one side has a round window cut out.

8. Using some of the remaining dough, cut out the 2 rectangles to be the sides of the house, approximately 3" x 4" in diameter. Use the remaining dough to cut out 4 even rectangles, approximately 2" x 1.5", to shape the chimney.

9. Arrange the pieces across the baking sheets. Bake for about 25 minutes until browned and dry to the touch. Remove to cooling racks to cool.

10. For the frosting: Combine the confectioners' sugar, meringue powder and 2 tablespoons warm water in a large mixing bowl.

11. Beat with an electric mixer until the frosting is thick and glossy, about 4 to 5 minutes; beat in more confectioners' sugar if too thin and more water if too thick.

12. Spoon into a piping bag fitted with a thin, round nozzle. Chill for 15 minutes.

13. To decorate: Using the frosting as 'glue,' assemble the chimney using the 4 even rectangles of gingerbread. Let dry and set.

14. Start to assemble the rest of the house by gluing the pieces together as per the image, attaching the front and back of the house to the sides before attaching the roof in place. Let set dry and set at each building interval.

15. Once the sections are dry, pipe more frosting onto the edges of the roof and down their sides, shaped as icicles.

16. When the chimney is set, attach it to the top, cutting the pieces to fit if necessary, and decorating the outside with frosting.

17. To decorate: Attach the assorted candies to the house, decorating the roof with a tiled pattern using the frosting.

18. Let the house dry and set until ready to serve.



Tips: Some of the gingerbread pieces will bake quicker than others depending on their size; keep an eye on them and remove from the oven when ready.

Meringue powder is available online or from specialty cookware stores.

Preparation time: 2 hours

Cooling time: 2 hours, 15 minutes

Total time: 4 hours, 15 minutes

Difficulty: Difficult

Colorful cookies *for family baking sessions*

Baking during the holiday season is a tradition in many households across the globe.

Family baking sessions provide a perfect holiday season bonding activity, and the payoff is both cherished family time and delicious, indulgent foods once the items are ready to eat.

Holiday hosts know they'll need to feed their guests over the course of their stay, and that includes snacks. This holiday season, hosts can involve their guests in family baking sessions and whip up a batch of these delicious and colorful "Christmas Biscuits" from Lines+Angles.



Christmas Biscuits

Makes approximately 24 cookies

For the dough:

1½ cups all-purpose flour, sifted,
plus extra for dusting
1⅓ cups confectioner's sugar,
plus extra for dusting
¾ cup almond meal
1 cup unsalted butter, cold and cubed
1 large egg yolk
1 tablespoon cold water
½ teaspoon fine salt

For the icing and decoration:

4 cups confectioner's sugar
3 tablespoons meringue powder
7 tablespoons warm water,
combined with 1 teaspoon vanilla
extract, assorted food color
(e. g., red, pink and turquoise),
assorted colored sugar crystals
(e. g., red, pink and white)

Tip: Frosting consistency should be similar to the consistency of toothpaste. If your icing is too thick, thin it out with some warm water, mixing it into the icing in drops.

1. For the dough: Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease and line two large baking sheets with parchment paper.

2. Combine flour, confectioner's sugar and almond meal in a large mixing bowl. Stir well to mix.

3. Add butter, egg yolk, water, and salt, and mix well with an electric mixer with spiral attachments until mixture starts to come together as a dough.

4. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead briefly until even. Wrap in plastic wrap and chill for 30 minutes.

5. After chilling, roll out dough on a lightly floured surface to approximately 0.25" thickness.

6. Use assorted star-shaped cookie cutters to cut out approximately 23 variably sized star shapes. Arrange between prepared sheets, spaced apart.

7. From remaining dough, cut out one teardrop and two semi-circles of dough, using appropriate cutters or working freehand with a paring knife. Arrange on one of the baking sheets.

8. Bake cookies for 12 to 15 minutes, until golden and dry to the touch. Remove to cooling racks to cool.

9. For the icing and decoration: Thoroughly stir together confectioner's sugar and meringue powder in a large mixing bowl.

10. Gradually beat in warm water and vanilla extract mixture using an electric mixer until icing is smooth and of a

flooding consistency; you may not need all of the water.

11. Divide icing between three bowls. Color two bowls pink and red, respectively, by beating in enough pink and red coloring to achieve uniform colors. Leave the third bowl uncolored.

12. Spoon pink and red icing into separate piping bags fitted with small, round-tip nozzles.

13. To ice the cookies, pipe around their perimeters with the icings to create borders. Fill in middle of cookies with more icing; you can use a damp, warm offset palette knife to spread out icing to an even finish.

14. Carefully transfer iced cookies to cooling racks, decorating with the sugar crystals in festive patterns.

15. Using same technique as in steps 13 and 14, ice teardrop cookie with red and white icing for Santa's hat and beard, respectively. Ice the two semi-circle cookies with white icing.

16. Before icings have set, carefully attach semi-circle cookies to teardrop cookie to fashion Santa's mustache. Color any remaining white icing with turquoise coloring and then dab onto teardrop cookie for Santa's eyes. Pipe some pink icing below eyes for his nose.

17. Let cookies set and harden before serving.

Preparation time: 1 hour, 20 minutes

Cooling time: 30 minutes

Christmas Cookies

embody the joy of holiday cooking

The holiday season simply wouldn't be the same without food. The joyful spirit of the season lends itself to sharing a bite if not a full meal with family and friends. Perhaps that explains why so many people embrace the joy of baking each holiday season. Some bake to honor and continue family traditions, while others spend hours crafting cookies to put a smile on the face of loved ones each holiday season.

Whatever it is that inspires individuals to break out the measuring cups, flour and whisk, cookie fans undoubtedly appreciate that spark of confectionary creativity. This holiday season, those with an urge to bake some cookies can try this recipe for "Christmas Linz Shortbread Cookies with Red Jam" from Lines+Angles.



Christmas Linz Shortbread Cookies With Red Jam

Makes 24 cookies

2 cups all-purpose flour
 ¾ cup almond flour
 ½ teaspoon kosher salt
 ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
 ¾ cup sugar
 2 egg yolks
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1 tablespoon lemon zest
 ½ cup raspberry jam
 ½ cup powdered sugar

1. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, almond flour, salt, and cinnamon together. In a separate bowl, beat the butter and sugar until fluffy. Add in the egg yolks, vanilla extract and lemon zest and continue to beat until well incorporated.
2. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and continue to beat until just combined to form a dough. Divide the dough in half; pat each half into a disc, wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least an hour.
3. Remove the dough from the refrigerator, and let it soften for about 5 minutes, until soft enough to roll. On a lightly floured surface, roll one disc of dough out to about ¼" thickness. Using a 3" cookie cutter, cut out cookies. Cut out a top for each cookie using a smaller cookie cutter to cut out the center. Transfer the cookies to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Gather the scrap dough, roll, and repeat.

4. Place the first batch of cut cookies in the refrigerator for 30 minutes to chill. Preheat the oven to 350 F and repeat the process with the second batch of dough.
5. Bake the chilled cookies for about 12 minutes or until just starting to turn golden around the edges. Let the cookies cool for a few minutes until transferring them to a wire rack to cool completely.
6. Once cooled, spread the bottom half of each cookie with some raspberry preserves, leaving a thin border around each cookie. Dust the tops of each cookie with powdered sugar and place on its corresponding bottom half. Use a spoon or piping bag to fill the cut-out center with a little more of the preserves.

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resting time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Baking time: 15 minutes

Difficulty: Easy

Enjoy Irish coffee at home

Weather-related flight delays or cancellations are often the cause of much frustration. However, one timely storm nearly 80 years might just have paved the way for a beloved beverage.

In 1943, Joe Sheridan was working as a chef at the Shannon Airport in Ireland. According to the Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, on one fateful night, a flight bound for Newfoundland was forced to return to the airport in Foynes due to inclement weather. Sheridan was called back to work that night and asked to create a warm beverage for the suddenly stranded passengers. Quick on his feet, Sheridan brewed some coffee but decided to add a little whiskey. Asked if the beverage was Brazilian coffee, Sheridan shook his head before indicating his newly minted creation was “Irish coffee.” And thus a legendary beverage was born.

This recipe, courtesy of the Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, can be great for anyone who wants warm up with their own batch of Irish coffee at home.



Step One

Preheat your Foynes Irish coffee glass by filling it with boiling water for 5 seconds, then pour the water out.

Step Two

Add 1 teaspoon of brown sugar and a good measure of Irish whiskey into the warmed glass.

Step Three

Fill the glass to within 1 centimeter of the brim with hot, strong black coffee. Stir well to dissolve all the brown sugar.

Step Four

Carefully pour lightly whipped cream over the back of a spoon so that it floats on top of the coffee.

Step Five

Do not stir after adding the cream; optimal flavor comes from drinking the coffee and Irish whiskey through the cream.

Tips to plan an eclectic holiday menu

The holiday season is steeped in tradition. Though family traditions are part of what makes December such a special time of year, holiday hosts still have some wiggle room when welcoming loved ones into their homes.

If tradition governs how holiday hosts celebrate the season with their families, they may find some flexibility in the kitchen. This December, hosts can consider these ways to make their holiday menus a little more eclectic and unpredictable.

• **Embrace local ingredients.** Locally sourced foods have a tendency to taste more fresh than imported alternatives, which is reason enough to incorporate them into holiday menus. In addition, relying on locally sourced foods when preparing holiday meals can be a great way to introduce new dishes to a holiday dinner table. Guests may be impressed by a new flavor profile, and they'll surely be happy to learn they're supporting local businesses during a time of year when shopping local has gained greater popularity.

• **Offer a new twist on old favorites.** Celebrants, including hosts, have come to expect certain foods during the holiday season. For instance, some may shudder at the thought of a Thanksgiving dinner table without turkey. Though holiday season staples may need to make an appearance at dinnertime this December, hosts can offer a new twist on some old favorites. In lieu of roasting a turkey this year, offer a deep-fried alternative. Such a twist produces an entirely different flavor profile. When it comes time to serve dessert, offer apple crumb pie in place of traditional apple pie. Fall is peak apple-picking season, so come the holiday season hosts and guests may be happy to enjoy a unique twist on this beloved dessert.

• **Incorporate seasonal ingredients.**

Another way to ensure freshness has a place at your holiday dinner table is to emphasize seasonal ingredients. Such items are those that are at their most fresh in late fall and early winter, and which foods you choose may depend on where you live, particularly if you're focused on providing locally sourced seasonal ingredients. Some simple tweaks to existing recipes can provide an entirely new flavor profile that will impress guests and leave them asking for another helping.

• **Prepare an ethnic dish.** Traditional holiday entrées like turkey and rib roast are not necessarily associated with any particular ethnic group or region of the world. Hosts who want to incorporate their heritage into holiday cooking, or simply include food from a favorite country they've visited or hope to visit, can prepare an ethnic dish as an appetizer, entrée or dessert. This unexpected addition to the menu can prompt engaging discussions and can serve as a great way for hosts to introduce their loved ones to a dish or style of cuisine they love.

Tradition is a big part of the holiday season.

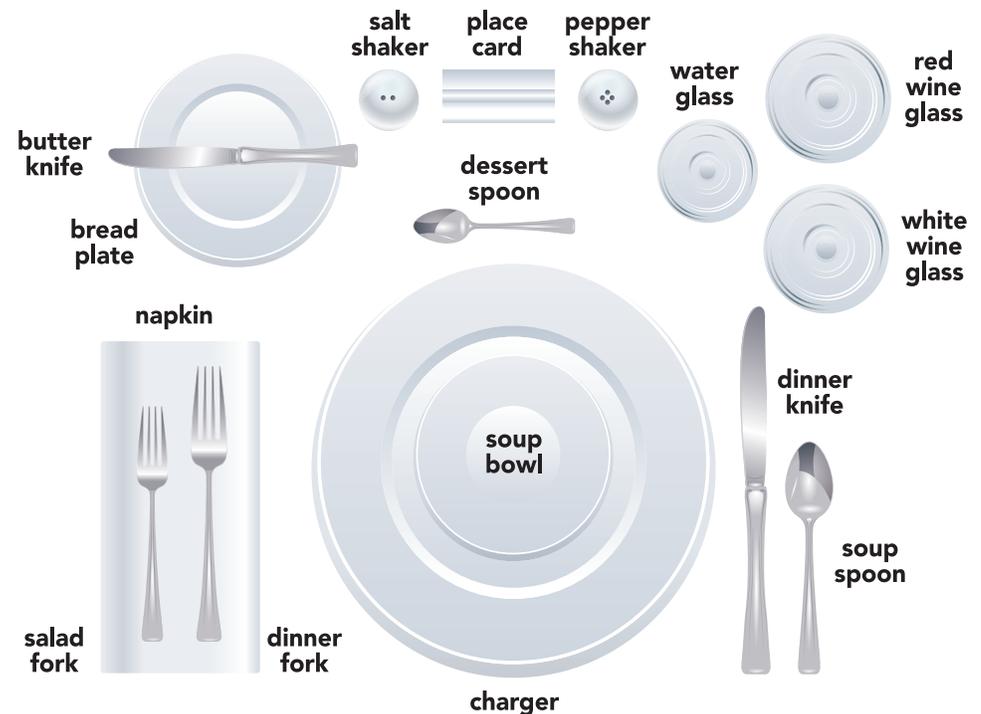
This season, hosts can start a new tradition by taking steps to prepare a more eclectic menu for guests.



How to set a Formal Dinner Table

Formal dining rooms may not be utilized as frequently as they once were. While modern families are more likely to eat most of their meals in expanded kitchens than in formal dining rooms, the latter spaces do not lack utility. In fact, the usefulness of formal dining rooms is apparent each holiday season, when families and friends gather around the dinner table to break bread together.

Holiday hosts undoubtedly recognize the utility of formal dining rooms. Such spaces help set holiday gatherings with family and friends apart from dinners throughout the rest of the year. That's even more apparent when table settings are set in adherence to traditional etiquette. Formal dinner table settings can add a touch of elegance to holiday affairs. The following guidelines can help hosts establish a more formal atmosphere as they prepare to welcome friends and family members into their homes this holiday season.



Plates and bowls

It's not uncommon for diners to visit an upscale restaurant and ponder the purpose of the dishes, utensils and other items neatly placed around each place at the table. Hosts who want to recreate that look for their holiday get-togethers should recognize there are various essentials at formal dinner tables that they would not see or use when setting tables for casual affairs. A charger plate, for example, is a large, decorative and ornamental plate that essentially serves as the foundation for other items. Food is not to be placed on the charger plate.

Soup bowls are typically placed atop the charger plate before guests sit down, and are then removed after soup has been served and consumed. A bread plate to the upper left of the charger plate is another component of a formal table setting.

Utensils

Extra utensils specific for certain foods are another component of a formal table setting. Forks are placed to the left of the charger plate, with the salad fork on the outer edge and the larger dinner fork closest to the plate. A soup spoon goes on the outer right side of the charger plate, while a knife is on the inner right side

next to the plate. A butter knife can be placed atop the bread plate, and a dessert spoon can be laid along the top of the plate parallel to the back of the guest's chair.

Glassware

It's customary to provide a water glass, red wine glass and white wine glass at a formal dinner table. The glasses are placed off to the upper right side of the plate, with the water glass on the inside and the white wine glass on the outer side nearest to the plate. The red wine glass is located on the outer side and is typically the furthest away from the plate.

Additional items

A salt shaker and pepper shaker can be placed in front of each place setting at the top of the plate nearest to the center of the table. If the party is large and seats have been assigned, a place card indicating each guest's name can be placed between the salt and pepper shakers with the name of the guest facing outward.

Formal place settings at holiday dinner tables can add a touch of elegance and sophistication to seasonal gatherings with family and friends.

7 ways to enjoy a healthy holiday

Certain words are synonymous with the holiday season, and “festive,” “family,” “friends,” and “food” are certainly among them. Celebrants focus on being a little more indulgent with their time and habits as the year comes to a close, and health and fitness may be set to simmer on the back burner.

According to a research review published in the journal *Obesity*, the average person gains between 0.8 and 2 pounds during the holiday season. Food represents more than just nutrition this time of year, as family gatherings around the dinner table are about tradition and fellowship. While no one wants to feel deprived when holiday celebrations arrive, it is important to make smart choices and continue to prioritize health as much as possible. These seven tips can help.

According to a research review published in the journal *Obesity*,

the average person gains between 0.8 and 2 pounds during the holiday season.

1. Plan your daily eating.

Scale back meals accordingly if a large family feast is on the docket at dinnertime. While you shouldn't skip meals altogether, a light breakfast or lunch may enable you to save more calories for dinner and treats to come later in the evening.

2. Aim for mostly healthy foods.

Buttery rolls, fatty roasts, candied yams, and pies come out in full force during the holidays. Try to make the majority of your plate full of lean protein, low-fat dairy and plenty of vegetables and whole grains. Then you can splurge on one or two foods like pumpkin pie.

3. Remain physically active.

It may be tempting to hibernate inside watching heartfelt holiday movies on television, but resist the urge to be sedentary. Keep up normal fitness routines, aiming for the recommended 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise. Take the stairs at malls and park further away from stores when shopping for the holidays to add a little extra movement to your day.



4. Get enough sleep.

It may seem your schedule is packed with everything from parties to holiday preparation, but it is important to get adequate rest. Without enough sleep, you may feel sluggish and your immune system may not be as strong.

5. Lay off the alcohol.

Holiday toasts are replete with delicious cocktails. However, moderation is key whenever alcohol is being served. Popular drinks often are calorie-dense, and health experts warn that consuming too much alcohol is linked to a higher risk of developing certain conditions, like liver issues, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, says WebMD. Opt for non-alcoholic beverages. Water and unsweetened drinks are healthy options.

6. Position yourself away from the buffet.

When you are close to food, you might engage in mindless nibbling. Find a seat away from the dinner table or buffet during holiday gatherings.

7. Slow down and be aware.

The holiday season is a busy time of year, and that means people may be racing around distracted or in a rush. Take special care to be alert while driving to avoid accidents that can lead to injuries or even fatalities. Although nutrition often isn't top of mind during the holiday season, healthy behaviors shouldn't be completely forgotten during this festive time of year.

Healthy holiday recipe *swaps*

Although presents garner most of the fanfare during the holiday season, there is no denying that food and entertaining also figure prominently this time of year. *Delish* magazine reports that Christmas food consumption ranks third, behind Thanksgiving and Super Bowl Sunday, among Americans, and that a single Christmas meal can weigh in at 3,000 calories, not factoring in any other food consumed that day.

No one wants to feel held back while having fun with family and friends, but smart food choices can mean healthier living during this season of festivities. Dish up these alternatives when holiday entertaining.



- **Lean on leaner cuts of meat.** A strong body is built on protein, and holiday hosts often make a meat or poultry dish the star of the holiday dinner table. When selecting holiday fare, choose leaner options such as “round” or “loin” roasts; otherwise, select white-fleshed fish and skinless poultry in lieu of other options.

- **Use broths instead of creams.** Soups and gravies are popular this time of year, and both can be made healthier by opting for stock or broth bases over more fattening milks or creams when creating these recipes.

- **Create a one-crust pie.** Pie is one of the more popular holiday desserts, and plenty of the calories come from a rich, buttery crust. Lighten up by serving a one-crust pie, such as pumpkin or sweet potato. Fruit-based pies like apple or blueberry also can be made with one crust. Simply top the fruit with a light crumb coating.

- **Find ways to incorporate vegetables.** Vegetables are low in calories and rich in vitamins and nutrients. Many also are high in fiber, so they can help people avoid overeating. According to dietary experts from the American Heart Association, people should aim for four to five servings of vegetables each day. When making a plate, fill half of the plate with vegetables. Enhance dishes like lasagna or other pastas with fresh vegetables as well.

- **Skip the fried bird.** Although deep-frying a turkey can reduce cooking time, frying historically is not the best cooking method for those who are making health-conscious choices. Rather than frying, consider spatchcocking (also known as butterflying) the turkey to enable it to cook faster. Use fresh herbs and seasonings instead of butter and oil to flavor your turkey as well.

- **Skip the cocktails.** The Center for Science in the Public Interest says that classic cocktails with little to no added sugar typically fall into the 150- to 200-calorie range, while others can be about 200 to 300 calories each. Many people will want to save those extra calories for dessert or another indulgent dish rather than drinking them away. If you want to simulate a cocktail, make a spritzer with sparkling water and unsweetened cranberry juice.

Celebrants can make some smart choices in the foods and beverages they eat to enjoy a healthier holiday season this December.

Why you should shop local for the holidays and beyond



Various components come together to make the holiday season a festive time of year. There is a lot to get done in a short amount of time during the holiday season, and part of that includes shopping for all of the family members and friends on your shopping list. Shopping can be a complicated process that involves identifying which stores will be the best places to shop. Local retailers make the perfect place to shop for holiday items.

According to the American Express Business Economic Impact Study, more than two-thirds of every dollar spent with a local business stays in the community. Indeed, shopping local benefits consumer and community alike. The following are some of the many perks to shopping locally throughout the holiday season.

According to the American Express Business Economic Impact Study,

more than two-thirds of every dollar spent with a local business stays in the community.

• **Personalized attention:** Small businesses are known for their personalized customer service and owners and staff are often lauded for taking the time to interact and learn about their customers, a dynamic that is impossible at larger retailers.

• **Meet and interact with people:** Shopping in-person at local stores, you'll see faces from your community and become better known in the local area.

• **Shorter lines:** Local stores are bound to have smaller crowds and thus shorter lines. That translates to less stress and hassle when it comes to getting in and out with holiday gifts.

• **Smaller carbon footprint:** Pollution, traffic congestion, habitat loss, and resource depletion may not occur on the same levels when shopping locally compared to patronizing big box stores. That's because local retailers tend to create or source their products locally, whereas many big box stores secure their goods overseas.

• **Easier parking:** This goes hand-in-hand with smaller crowds, as shopping locally does not typically require driving up and down endless aisles at malls or standalone retail stores in an effort to find a parking spot. Local retailers in town may have on-street parking or closed lots that are convenient to shoppers.

• **Small batch shopping experience:** Consumers can secure items in small businesses that are not carbon copies of those found across the country at major retail chains. When seeking a unique, thoughtful gift, shopping locally is the way to go.

Shopping locally this holiday season provides an array of benefits to consumers, and helps to solidify a strong Main Street in communities.