
JANE SMITH LIFESTYLE
Your
Thanksgiving,
Figured Out
The menu, recipes and timing
for a calmer holiday.
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2026 • DINNER FOR EIGHT
MENU / RECIPES / COUNTDOWN / OVEN PLAN

Our Traditional Thanksgiving Menu

ONE MENU • EIGHT GUESTS • DINNER AT 4 PM



THE MAIN COURSE

Herb-Roasted Turkey & Pan Gravy

Make-ahead mashed potatoes • Classic herb stuffing
Roasted vegetables • Cranberry sauce • Dinner rolls

Pumpkin Pie with Whipped Cream

A simple plan for how much to make

Turkey	One 12–14 lb bird, fully thawed
Sides	3 lb potatoes • one 9 × 13 in pan of stuffing
Vegetables & extras	3 lb vegetables • 2 cups cranberry sauce • 12 rolls
Gravy & dessert	2 cups gravy • one deep-dish 9 in pie, cut into 8 slices

Recipes and planning quantities are sized for eight unless noted. For generous pie portions or seconds, bake two.

Herb-Roasted Turkey

A GOLDEN CENTERPIECE, COOKED BY TEMPERATURE



FEATURED RECIPE • SERVES 8 WITH LEFTOVERS

INGREDIENTS

One 12–14 lb turkey, fully thawed
3 tbsp olive oil or softened butter
1 tsp fine salt*
1 tsp black pepper
1 tsp dried thyme, optional

*Reduce or omit salt for a pre-brined or kosher bird. Remove the neck and giblet packet. Do not rinse raw poultry.

METHOD

1. Heat oven to **325°F**. Pat turkey dry and place breast-side up on a rack in a roasting pan.

2. Rub with oil or butter, salt, pepper and thyme. Roast **unstuffed**; loosely tent if browning too quickly.

3. Start checking near 3 hours. A 12–14 lb bird generally takes **3–3¾ hours**, but the thermometer decides.

4. Check the thickest breast and innermost thigh and wing: each must reach **165°F**. Rest 20–30 minutes before carving.

THAW AHEAD Allow about 24 hours per 4–5 lb in a refrigerator at 40°F or below. Move this bird to the refrigerator on Sunday, November 22, on a tray below ready-to-eat food.

Open Jane's turkey guide

Thanksgiving Favorites

FOUR USEFUL RECIPES • CLICK EACH TITLE FOR THE FULL GUIDE



Creamy Mashed Potatoes

For 8: 3 lb potatoes, 12 tbsp butter, ¾–1⅛ cups milk or cream; salt to taste.

Peel and cut potatoes evenly. Cover with cold salted water; bring to a boil and simmer until fork-tender. Drain well. Mash with butter, then warm dairy until smooth. Season. Make a day ahead, chill promptly in shallow containers and reheat to 165°F, adding warm milk as needed.



Classic Herb Stuffing

For 8: 10 cups dry bread cubes; 6 tbsp butter; 1 diced onion; 3 celery stalks; 1 tsp each sage and thyme; ½ tsp each salt and pepper; 2½–3 cups broth; 2 eggs.

Soften onion and celery in butter. Toss with bread and seasonings. Add broth and beaten eggs. Bake in a 9 × 13 in dish at 350°F, covered 25 min, then uncovered 15–25 min, until center is 165°F.



Smooth Pan Gravy

Makes 2 cups: 2 tbsp turkey fat or butter, 2 tbsp flour, 2 cups defatted drippings and/or broth; salt and pepper to taste.

Whisk flour into hot fat; cook 1–2 minutes. Slowly whisk in liquid. Simmer 5–8 minutes, stirring, until smooth. Taste before salting. Strain any lumps. For thicker gravy, simmer longer; for thinner, add broth. Double for generous portions.



Golden Roasted Vegetables

For 8: 2 lb broccoli florets, 1 lb carrots sliced ¼ in thick, ¼ cup olive oil, 1 tsp salt, ½ tsp pepper; lemon, optional.

Dry vegetables well and toss with oil and seasonings. Spread on two uncrowded sheet pans. Roast at 425°F for 20–30 minutes, turning and swapping racks halfway. Remove tender pieces early. Finish with lemon if desired.

The Thanksgiving Countdown

A SIMPLE DAILY PLAN • NOVEMBER 14–26, 2026

DATE	ONE THING TO GET DONE
SAT 14	Confirm eight guests, the menu and any food allergies.
SUN 15	Check roasting pan, thermometer, serving dishes and seating.
MON 16	Order or buy the turkey and pantry ingredients.
TUE 17	Assign drinks, rolls or a starter if guests offer to help.
WED 18	Check refrigerator space and label serving dishes.
THU 19	Buy shelf-stable extras, candles and napkins.
FRI 20	Check the turkey's thawing instructions and refrigerator temperature.
SAT 21	Shop for produce, dairy, eggs and fresh herbs.
SUN 22	Move frozen 12–14 lb turkey to refrigerator on a rimmed tray.
MON 23	Make cranberry sauce or buy it ready-made. Set the table.
TUE 24	Cube and dry the bread for stuffing; check recipe ingredients.
WED 25	Bake pie; prepare the make-ahead dishes on page 7.
THU 26	Follow the cooking plan. Use temperatures, not guesses.

If you are starting late: simplify. Buy cranberry sauce and rolls, ask a guest to bring dessert, and prioritize a safely thawed turkey. Never thaw it on the counter.

Thanksgiving Cooking Schedule

FOR A 4 PM DINNER • ONE OVEN + STOVETOP + MICROWAVE

TIME	TASK
10:45 AM	Clear counters. Take out tools and serving dishes, not the raw bird.
11:00 AM	Preheat oven to 325°F. Prepare the fully thawed turkey.
11:30 AM	Put turkey in the oven. Roast unstuffed on a rack.
2:30 PM	Begin temperature checks. The estimate is 2:30–3:15 PM, not a promise.
WHEN DONE	At 165°F in all three areas, rest 20–30 minutes. Turn oven to 425°F for vegetables.
3:00 PM	Reheat potatoes on stovetop; microwave stuffing in shallow batches to 165°F.
OVEN FREE	Reheat cooked vegetables to 165°F in oven, or use microwave if needed.
3:30 PM	Make gravy once drippings are ready. Carve turkey close to serving.
3:45 PM	Warm rolls per package directions. Put cranberry sauce on the table.
4:00 PM	Serve. Refrigerate leftovers promptly in shallow containers.

If the turkey runs late: use the microwave for all cooked sides and skip oven-warming rolls. Delay dinner until the turkey reaches 165°F in all three areas.

If it finishes early: refrigerate each dish within two hours after it leaves the heat. A turkey done at 2:30 PM needs chilling by 4:30 PM unless held at 140°F or above. Foil alone is not safe hot-holding.



Make-Ahead Plan

GET AHEAD, STAY RELAXED

2–3 DAYS AHEAD

Cranberry sauce & the table

Make cranberry sauce or buy it ready-made. Refrigerate homemade sauce. Set the table and label dishes so serving is easy.

WEDNESDAY

Pumpkin pie

Bake the pie, cool no longer than two hours, then refrigerate. Serve chilled or briefly take out for serving; return leftovers promptly.

WEDNESDAY

Stuffing, potatoes & vegetables

Fully cook the dishes using the recipes. Divide into shallow containers and refrigerate within two hours. Do not pack warm food into a deep dish.

THURSDAY

Reheat & finish

Reheat cooked sides to 165°F. Stir microwave portions and check several spots. Finish gravy from turkey drippings just before the meal.

A few calm fixes

Lumpy gravy: whisk, then strain. **Thick potatoes:** loosen with warm milk. **Dry stuffing:** add a little broth and reheat covered.

Leftovers: chill within two hours, keep at 40°F or below and use within 3–4 days. Reheat to 165°F. Freeze extras sooner if you will not eat them in time.

Food safety reference: FoodSafety.gov

Classic Pumpkin Pie

THE SWEET FINISH • ONE DEEP-DISH 9 IN PIE • 8 SLICES



INGREDIENTS

1 unbaked deep-dish 9 in crust
1 can (15 oz) pumpkin purée, not pie filling
¾ cup packed brown sugar
2 large eggs
1 can (12 fl oz) evaporated milk
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
½ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp salt
1 tsp vanilla extract
Whipped cream, to serve

METHOD

1. Heat oven to **425°F**. Fit the crust into the pie dish.

2. Whisk pumpkin, sugar, eggs, milk, spices, salt and vanilla until smooth. Fill crust below the crimp; set on a preheated baking sheet.

3. Bake **15 minutes at 425°F**, then reduce to **350°F** and bake **35–45 minutes** more, until the edges are set and the center has a slight wobble. Shield the crust if needed.

4. Cool no longer than two hours, then refrigerate at least two hours before slicing. Use within four days.

Open Jane's pumpkin pie recipe

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