

Last Minute Tips and Tricks for the Thanksgiving Dinner

Thanksgiving is already here!!! We will have bountiful food on our tables this Thanksgiving. Friends and family will fly, drive, or even sail to come and spend time with us. This is a holiday during which they can spend quality time with us.

But deep down in our hearts we know that we are tired, and we need a break. Should the stress from classrooms move into our kitchens? How many side dishes should there be? What kind of appetizers should I prepare? Will the guests love it? How and when should I thaw the turkey? What about my pies? Should I have pumpkin pie or sweet potato pie or maybe just the apple pie?

Remember the most important part of this holiday is enjoying the quality time with loved ones and taking time to look back and reflect on the wonderful things that God had given us and to be thankful to Him. It's not about spending long hours making countless Thanksgiving dishes.

There's an old saying that goes this way, "Choose your battles." It surely works in times like this. If you feel too overwhelmed, then pick the dishes you can easily make at home with no effort, and then pull together the supermarket products to set up your table. Here are some tips and tricks you can pull off and make your supermarket products/ boxes look, smell, and taste good on your plates. You can use these principles for any holiday.

Mashed Potatoes

- Add some freshly chopped chives with some low-fat sour cream.
- Stir in some roasted garlic cloves and fresh, finely chopped parsley while you're whipping up the mashed potatoes with your mixer.

Stuffing – Stove Top:

Apart from the directions on the box, add 2 tablespoons of butter or margarine to sauté some added vegetables (like 1/2 cup chopped onion, 1/2 cup finely chopped celery, 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic, and 1/2 cup finely grated carrot). Then add the seasoning packet and 1 3/4 cups water and bring to boil. Cover the pot and reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in bread cubes from the mix, and cover and let stand 5 minutes.

Green Beans:

Microwave the beans before serving and dress them up in the serving dish with any or all of the following:

- A sprinkle of salt-free herb blends
- Some shredded Parmesan cheeses
- Toasted almonds
- A drizzle of olive oil or pat of butter/margarine (just enough to add a slight glaze to the dish)
- Sautéed red pepper strips
- Caramelized onions

Pumpkin Pie

You can buy a premade piecrust. Just whip up the pumpkin part.

Then dress it up with some fun garnishes. Serve your pie with Cool Whip, a few pinches of pumpkin pie spice and a teaspoon or two of maple syrup.

Cranberry Sauce:

If you like the fancier types with whole cranberries, then maybe flecks of orange zest or raspberry is good. You can cheat a little by warming up a can of whole cranberry sauce in the microwave (to soften it) then whisking in:

- Finely chopped orange
- A few tablespoons of less-sugar raspberry preserves, or
- Any of your own favorite ingredients

Gravy:

With the bottled gravy, you just heat and serve. It doesn't get much easier than that. But if you want to make a tasty light gravy, then use the brown crusty particles at the bottom of the roasting pan (that's where the flavor is, anyway) with a minimum of the fat part of the turkey drippings. Cream up your gravy using a little fat-free half-and-half or low-fat milk.

Rolls:

Dress up heat-and-serve rolls with some flavored butters such as a garlic-herb spread; cranberry-walnut cinnamon spread, or just a zesty lemon spread.

As you sit down with family and friends at the Thanksgiving dinner table don't forget the meaning of THANKS and GIVING. Thank God for everything and give someone something that you would love someone to give you.



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