HOMESTEAD WIFE LIFE

My Thanksgiving Plan

How I get it all done, day by day

This is my real routine. Take what helps you and leave what doesn't.

OUR DINNER IS SERVED AT 6 PM

THE MENU

- Roast turkey with sage, garlic and white wine compound butter
- White wine, shallot and sage gravy
- Sausage and apple stuffing
- Roasted garlic mashed potatoes with sour cream and browned butter
- Green beans sautéed with bacon and shallots
- Sherry creamed pearl onions with Parmesan
- Homemade cranberry compote
- Homemade dinner rolls
- Pumpkin pie
- Deep dish apple pie

THE WEEK BEFORE

DAY	IN THE KITCHEN	HOUSE AND TABLE
Saturday Nov 21	• **Grocery shopping day** • Frozen turkey? Move it to the fridge to thaw (see the thaw chart on page 2)	• Finalize the menu and guest list • Having house guests? Prep the guest room • Make breakfasts and grab-and-go snacks and have them ready in the freezer
Sunday Nov 22	• Review your recipes and menu and confirm nothing is missing • Clean out the fridge to make room for a big cooking week. *Need more room? Stand cans on a shelf and lay a sheet pan across them to make an extra shelf.*	• Give the house a good clean before guests arrive • Choose your china, crystal and silver • Buy disposable containers for sending leftovers home with guests
Monday Nov 23	• Bake baguettes for the stuffing • Make the turkey stock, cool and strain it, and save the fat • Make homemade bulk sausage for the stuffing	• Polish the silver and iron the table linens • Prep the beeswax candles • Pull out serving platters and bowls • Polish the wine glasses
Tuesday Nov 24	• Cube the bread and spread it on a sheet pan to dry out • Chop the carrots, celery and onions for the stuffing • Make the compound butter; wrap in wax paper, then plastic • Roast the garlic for the mashed potatoes • Make the cranberry compote • Peel the pearl onions, unless you find frozen (they are hard to find)	
Wednesday Nov 25	• Toast the bread cubes; caramelize the carrots, celery and onions • Make the dinner roll dough through shaping • Dry brine the turkey • Assemble the sherry creamed pearl onions (hold back the crumb topping) • Make pâte brisée for both pies • Clean, blanch and shock the green beans • Peel and cut the russet potatoes; keep them in cold water overnight in the pot you will cook them in, lid on	• Set the table (unless you have cats) • Chill the white wine for dinner • Using fresh flowers? Pick them up for the centerpiece, trim the stems and set them in cool water

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Thanksgiving Day

Thursday, November 26 · Built for dinner at 6 PM

TIME	WHAT TO DO
9:30 AM	Bake the apple pie, then the pumpkin pie. Pies are best the day they are baked.
12:30 PM	Pies out to cool. Rinse the dry brine off the turkey and dry it extremely well. Set the turkey and the compound butter out to come to room temperature.
1:00 PM	Set the table and lay out platters and serving bowls (if you have cats). Make the flower arrangement if using, and place the candles; make sure matches or a lighter are on hand.
1:30 PM	Slip the compound butter under the skin, season, and add aromatics to the cavity if roasting whole. *Or spatchcock the turkey, butter under the skin, and set it on a bed of aromatics.*
1:45 PM	Whole turkey into the oven. *Spatchcocked turkey roasts faster: in around 3:45 PM.*
3:30 PM	Bring the stuffing to room temperature and dot the top with butter.
4:00 PM	Cook the bacon and shallots for the green beans. Leave them in the pan and set aside.
4:15 PM	Turkey about three quarters cooked: top the pearl onions with seasoned Parmesan panko crumbs, dot with butter and hold at room temperature. Put the potatoes on to boil.
4:30 PM	Final proof for the dinner rolls. Set the butter for the rolls out to soften.
4:45 PM	Make the mashed potatoes and hold them in a covered bowl over a pot of simmering water.
5:10 PM	When the breast reaches 155°F, move the turkey to a sheet pan to rest. *It keeps climbing to 165°F as it rests.*
5:15 PM	Stuffing into the oven. Pour the pan juices into a fat separator. Deglaze the roasting pan with white wine and add it to the drippings. Make the roux with the turkey fat, then the gravy; keep warm. Pearl onions into the oven.
5:35 PM	Finish the green beans in the bacon pan. Bake the rolls while you carve the turkey.
6:00 PM	Into bowls and onto platters. Serve. **Happy Thanksgiving!**

Times are a guide, based on a 14 lb turkey. Trust your thermometer, your eyes and your nose.

THAWING A FROZEN TURKEY

Thaw in the fridge. It must be fully thawed by Wednesday so you can dry brine it.

Over 16 lb	Start Friday
12 to 16 lb	Start Saturday
Under 12 lb	Sunday is fine

Still icy Wednesday? Thaw it in cold water in the sink, about 30 minutes per pound, changing the water every 30 minutes.

SERVING DINNER EARLY?

Bake the pies on Wednesday, then move every Thanksgiving Day time earlier:

Dinner at 2 PM	4 hours earlier
Dinner at 1 PM	5 hours earlier
Dinner at noon	6 hours earlier

For an early dinner, spatchcocking helps most: it roasts in about half the time.

AFTER DINNER: THE USDA TWO-HOUR RULE

The USDA calls 40°F to 140°F the "Danger Zone," where bacteria grow fastest, and advises refrigerating perishable food within 2 hours. With dinner at 6 PM, that means leftovers in the fridge by 8 PM. Carve the rest of the turkey off the bone and pack everything in shallow containers so it chills quickly. Fridge full? Make an extra shelf with cans and a sheet pan. Sending leftovers home with guests? Pack them before dessert, not after.

Source: USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, "Danger Zone (40°F to 140°F)," fsis.usda.gov

Make-Ahead Roasted Turkey Stock

Made from roasted wings and necks, because there's no turkey carcass before Thanksgiving

Makes: about 3 quarts, plus a second run **Roast:** 400°F, about 1¾ hours **Simmer:** about 4 hours

INGREDIENTS

For Roasting

- 8.8 lb turkey wings and necks
- A very light sprinkle of salt and pepper
- Yellow onions, halved, skin on, about 1½ lb
- Carrots, roughly chopped, about ¾ lb
- Celery, roughly chopped, about ¾ lb
- 1 head garlic, halved

For the Pot

- About 1 cup water, to deglaze the pan
- About 5 quarts cold water
- 5 g black peppercorns
- 2 large or 4 small bay leaves
- No salt in the pot

> **Maillard reaction:** the browning that happens when proteins and sugars meet high, dry heat. It builds the deep roasted flavor in the wings, the pan and the fat we save. No browning, no flavor.

> **Fond:** the browned bits stuck to the bottom of the roasting pan. It's pure concentrated flavor, so we never wash it away.

> **Deglaze:** pouring liquid into the hot pan and scraping up the fond so all that flavor goes into the stock.

> **Remouillage:** French for re-wetting. The second run of a stock, made by covering the strained bones and vegetables with fresh water and simmering again.

> **The 40 to 140 rule:** bacteria grow fastest between 40°F and 140°F, so food should spend no more than 2 hours in that range.

METHOD

1. **Roast the wings and necks.** Heat the oven to 400°F. Give the wings and necks a very light sprinkle of salt and pepper, spread them in a roasting pan and roast about 1 hour.
2. **Add the vegetables.** Tuck the onions, carrots, celery and garlic around the wings and necks, down into the fat. Why? Because the fat picks up their flavor, and that fat becomes your roux, so it carries flavor all the way into the gravy. Roast about 45 minutes more, until everything is a deep roasted brown. Smaller wings may need less time, so go by color.
3. **Save the fat.** Pour the fat off the pan into a jar and keep it for the roux.
4. **Deglaze.** Pour about 1 cup of water into the hot pan and scrape up every bit of the fond.
5. **Fill the pot.** Add the wings, necks, vegetables, the deglazing liquid, peppercorns and bay leaves to a large stockpot. Cover with about 5 quarts of cold water. Bring it up to a bare simmer and skim off any foam.
6. **Simmer.** Keep it at a gentle simmer for about 4 hours.
7. **Strain the first run.** Strain the stock. This first run, about 3 quarts, is very rich. Keep it for your gravy.
8. **Make the second run.** Return the bones and vegetables to the pot, cover with fresh water and let it go overnight on the lowest setting at just a gentle bubble. Rather not leave the stove on? Use a slow cooker, or simmer it 6 to 8 hours during the day. Strain and keep it separate for soups and rice.
9. **Cool and chill.** Cool the stock on the counter no more than 90 minutes, just until it won't warm up your fridge, then chill it overnight. In the morning, lift off the fat cap and set it aside for the roux.

> **Make it ahead.** On my Thanksgiving plan, the stock gets made Monday. It goes into both the stuffing and the gravy, so making it early takes a big job off your Thanksgiving Day.

> **Storage.** Keep the stock in the fridge up to 4 days. Making it further ahead? Freeze it, then move it to the fridge to thaw a day or two before you need it.

Roasted Turkey Gravy

Made with your roasted turkey stock, the pan drippings and a roux from the saved fat

Makes: about 5 cups **Serves:** 10 to 12 **Thickness:** just past coating a spoon

INGREDIENTS

For the Roux

- ½ cup turkey fat, lifted off your chilled stock
- ½ cup all-purpose flour

For the Gravy

- 1 tablespoon turkey fat
- 2 medium shallots, finely minced (about ½ cup), or ½ small onion
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup dry white wine, one you'd actually drink
- 4 cups (1 quart) roasted turkey stock, first run
- ½ to 1 cup pan drippings from the roast, fat skimmed off
- ¼ teaspoon rubbed sage, only if needed
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

> **Never use cornstarch in gravy.** Why? Because a roux adds flavor and cornstarch only thickens.

> **Save every bit of fat.** Lift it off the top of your chilled stock, and pour it out of the roasting pan on Thanksgiving Day. That fat is your roux.

> **Too thick?** Whisk in a splash of stock. **Too thin?** Add a little more roux and let it simmer. Gravy keeps thickening as it sits, so stop just a touch thinner than you want it.

> **Any roast works.** Use that roast's drippings and that roast's stock, and follow the same steps.

METHOD

1. **Make the roux.** Melt the fat in a small saucepan over medium-low heat. Whisk in the flour and keep stirring until it smells nutty and turns a light golden color, about 5 to 8 minutes. Set it aside to cool a little.
2. **Toast the aromatics.** In a medium saucepan over medium heat, warm 1 tablespoon of turkey fat. Add the shallots and garlic and cook until they're soft and golden at the edges, about 5 minutes. Keep an eye on the garlic. Why? Because burnt garlic turns bitter, and that bitterness will run through the whole pot.
3. **Add the wine.** Pour in the wine and scrape up anything stuck to the pan. Let it bubble until it has reduced by half and the sharp alcohol smell has softened, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. **Add the stock.** Pour in the stock and bring it up to a boil.
5. **Add the drippings.** Stir in the pan drippings from your roast.
6. **Thicken.** Whisking the whole time, add the roux a spoonful at a time. Let it come back to a simmer after each addition before you decide whether to add more. Why wait? Because roux doesn't show you how thick it really is until it simmers. Stop when the gravy coats the back of a spoon and clings, but still pours. Draw your finger through it on the spoon, and the line should hold. You may not use all the roux.
7. **Marry the flavors.** Turn the heat to low and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes. This also cooks out any raw flour taste.
8. **Taste.** The drippings already carry the sage and salt from your bird, so taste before you add anything. If it needs a little more, add a pinch of rubbed sage, salt and pepper.
9. **Strain and serve.** Pour it through a fine sieve into a warmed gravy boat or small pitcher. Why warm it? Because a cold dish pulls the heat out of your gravy, and it starts to thicken and skin over before it reaches the table.

> **Storage.** Leftovers keep in the fridge for up to 4 days. Reheat gently with a splash of stock.