



KELSEY NIXON'S HOW-TO HOME

Thanksgiving Timeline

YOUR 10-DAY PLANNING GUIDE

Making Thanksgiving dinner, especially if you've never done it before, can be a bit stressful and intimidating. Making sure all of the food is warm and presented at the same time is no small feat, so to make sure everything gets done in time, planning is key.

Even if you're a fairly easy going person who likes to cook from her hip, this is the one time of year that you might want to consider mapping out a game plan so that you can actually enjoy the big holiday with your friends and family.

I've put together a 10-day Thanksgiving timeline — a schedule of what to do from now until the big day!

10 DAYS BEFORE PT. 1

- **Determine Your Menu:** Include every dish, drink, and dessert you plan to make for the big day. Next to each menu item list whether it needs to be served warm (W), room temp (R), or cold (C). I also like to note whether or not the recipe will need the stovetop (ST) or the oven (O) and if I can make it ahead of time (MA).
- **Map Out Your Kitchen:** Oven and stove space is prime Real estate! Look at your side dishes that will need last-minute oven or stove top time, and consider swapping in a few dishes that can be served at room temperature. Don't forget that you can keep recipes warm in lots of unexpected places too! (slow cooker, toaster oven, grill, instant pot, etc.)
- **Assign Serving Dishes:** Pull out all your serving platters and dishes and label what dish goes in them with sticky notes. This will ensure that you have enough serveware. Don't forget to think about big serving spoons, forks, and tongs as well.
- **Print Your Recipes:** I believe that cooking is infinitely easier when cooking from a hard copy (i.e. **NOT** a device like your phone or computer). Use that home printer and print every recipe you plan to make, 3 hole punch your stack, and throw it in a binder.

10 DAYS BEFORE PT. 2

- **Let's Talk Turkey – and Make a Plan:** While most people roast a turkey in the oven, there's all sorts of ways that you can get the star of the show to your table. You can grill it or even deep fry it to free up oven space, or better yet order a smoked turkey from your local BBQ spot. Regardless, figure out what you want to do and make sure you order your turkey. If you are roasting a turkey the traditional way, make sure you have a roasting pan that is big enough and that it will fit in your oven.
- **Kitchen Tools Audit:** Using your recipes as your guide, read through each one and note what tools you'll need to make the dish and consider anything else you might need to pull off cooking Thanksgiving dinner.
- **Dish delegation:** Now is the time to assign who will bring what to your big dinner. I never turn down a guest that offers to bring something to contribute. Whether it's a signature dish in the menu lineup or an extra dessert, appetizer, or even just ice, all things are welcome at Thanksgiving. I like to avoid asking people to bring dishes that need to be cooked at the last minute or reheated, if at all possible.

8 DAYS BEFORE

- **Now + Later Shopping Lists:** Make two shopping lists – the first one is for ingredients you can buy now. Pick up everything that will last the week before Thanksgiving. Make a second shopping list of everything you'll need on your second shopping trip (or grocery order).
- **Determine Your Make-Ahead Items:** Figure out what dishes you'll be making ahead and make sure the ingredients are on your first shopping list for this week.
- **Shop Your Fridge + Pantry:** Now that you have a set shopping list, shop your own fridge, pantry, and freezer to avoid over-buying what you may already have. But don't be too quick to assume that you have all of the essentials on hand. Check for salt, pepper, flour, cornstarch, baking powder, and all those other staples.
- **Clean Out Your Fridge + Freezer:** Your fridge + freezer will shortly become Thanksgiving central, so pull everything out, wipe it down and incorporate anything you need to use to free up space before the big event.

7 DAYS BEFORE

- **Make Two Shopping Lists:** The first one is Grocery order or trip to the grocery store: Pull up your first shopping list and let's do this! I prefer grocery delivery or pick-up to simplify things, but however you plan to get your first round of groceries home, do it today.

6 DAYS BEFORE

- **Turkey Thaw:** If you bought a frozen turkey, start defrosting it in the refrigerator now. Good think you cleaned your refrigerator out and have space for it now! If you still need a Turkey recipe, visit [YouTube.com/KelseyNixon](https://www.youtube.com/KelseyNixon) and follow along with my Herb Butter Holiday Turkey recipe.

5 DAYS BEFORE

- **Make-Ahead Starts Now:** Look at your list of recipes that can be made ahead of time and make them today! So many parts of Thanksgiving dinner can be made ahead and this is the day to knock those out and store them properly. It will feel so good to get this done!

4 DAYS BEFORE

- **Round #2 of Shopping:** Either throw it in your online cart or your actual cart and get everything else you need for the big day.
- **Turkey Thaw:** If you just bought the frozen turkey (don't worry, I've been there), defrost it ASAP. If you prefer to brine your turkey, this would typically be the time to start that process.
- **Make-Ahead Review:** Take a look at your menu and think about anything else you could make ahead of time (for me this includes cranberry sauce or relish and gravy).
- **Prep Party:** Slice + dice your vegetables, toast nuts, and even consider pre-measuring a few things. If it can be done ahead, do it!

1 DAY BEFORE

- **Make Your Desserts:** Make all of your pies and desserts today. Start your dough for bread or rolls: Start your doughs now and stash in the fridge to proof overnight. Other dishes to make-ahead: If you have the time, consider making your stuffing and any other casseroles today that could easily be rewarmed.

NIGHT BEFORE

- **Table Time:** Set your entire Thanksgiving table the night before. This is crucial! It frees up so much time on the big day. Get the kiddos involved, too. My kids love to decorate name place cards for each family member and rearrange the "seating chart" -- they love being involved in the prep!

THANKSGIVING MORNING

- **Great Thanksgiving Bake-Off:** Bake rolls and breads and any remaining desserts. Get those ovens going early!
- **Potato Prep:** Peel them and put them in a pot with enough water to cover. They can sit that in this water at room temp until you're ready to cook them.
- **Chill the Drinks:** Don't forget to make sure you're covered on ice as well -- you've got time now to grab a bag from the corner store!

4 - 6 HOURS BEFORE DINNER

- **Turkey Time:** Depending on the size of your turkey, you'll want to give yourself around 4-6 hours of roasting time (about 3 hours for a 15 lb. turkey), but don't forget that turkey can rest and stay warm for quite a long time. Also, a warm bird is much easier to carve than a hot one.
- **Make Mashed Potatoes:** Make your mashed potatoes and keep them warm in a slow cooker or instant pot with pats of butter on top.
- **Prep Stuffing and Casseroles:** If you haven't already done so, prep everything for your dressing/stuffing and any casseroles so they're ready to go in the oven.

2 HOURS BEFORE DINNER

- **Make-Ahead Dishes:** Take any dishes or desserts that need to be reheated out of the fridge so they start to come to room temperature. This might include pies (unless they're made of custard or cream).
- **Appetizer Assembly:** Set up your appetizer platters or boards so they are ready to go when the first guest arrives. Ideally what you're serving can be served at room temperature.
- **Whip It Good:** If you're using whipped cream to top pies, make it now and throw it in the fridge with plastic wrap on top.



Looking for more Thanksgiving Recipes?
Check out these Gratitude Rolls and more on [KelseyNixon.com](https://www.kelsenixon.com)

1 HOUR BEFORE DINNER

- **Turkey:** Your turkey should just be coming out of the oven! Move it to a serving platter and let it rest. If you're planning to carve it before serving, do it about 20-30 minutes before dinner and cover it with foil to keep warm.
- **Gravy:** If you are making gravy from the drippings, do it now. If you have make-ahead gravy, get it into the saucepan and add any drippings from your turkey (this is my preferred method).
- **Pre-heat to Reheat:** Begin reheating dishes in the oven.
- **Finish Vegetables:** Finish sautéing or grilling the vegetables.
- **Fill Glasses and Clean Up:** Designate someone to fill up water glasses and pitchers. If you have the luxury of time or a helpful guest, get the sink cleared and the dishwasher running.

RIGHT BEFORE DINNER

- **Heat Up Gravy:** Get that gravy hot and transfer it into the gravy boat.
- **Plate Everything:** Get some help transferring everything into their designated serving platters and place them on their station.
- **Warm Pies:** Place pies in a warm oven (that's been turned off) right before dinner and they'll be the perfect temperature for dessert.
- **Free Up the Dishwasher:** An empty dishwasher means your guests can load their dishes as they finish cleaning up a breeze.

**IT'S TIME FOR
DINNER**

Enjoy!



All of the thought, prep, shopping, baking, chopping, stirring, cleaning, basting, plating, has all lead up to this moment. However your table looks this year, we all have something to be thankful for. Personally, I'm thankful for my family, my new home in sunny California, and of course BUTTER! Now it's time to eat and enjoy!

Happy Thanksgiving!

PS. You did a really good job, give yourself a high five!

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