

Cooking with the Club

by our own
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Send Us Your Recipes!

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Food Prep Critical for a Great Holiday

Thanksgiving Day is one of the most widely known and celebrated holidays in the United States. The day after is perhaps one of the most widely recognized days – for the medical community. Why? Hospital emergency rooms across the country get extremely busy treating people for food-borne illnesses from food consumed at Thanksgiving dinner and from leftovers. And I know that many of you who have read *Cooking with the Club* for the past three years realize that food-borne illness prevention, especially during the holiday season, is an obsession of mine.

Food-borne illness is caused when large amounts of bacteria grow on protein-based foods including chicken, turkey, etc. The risk of food-borne illness is a very real problem, and it happens when people do not pay special attention to the handling and preparation of foods. Those at the highest risk – the elderly, children and individuals with weakened immune systems, including pregnant women – should be mindful of the potential risks.

For your Thanksgiving dinner, thawing turkey completely before cooking is important and necessary to reduce the risk of getting sick. If a turkey is not properly thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria. Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw and cook a whole turkey. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs two to three days to thaw completely when thawed in

the refrigerator at a temperature of no more than 40 degrees F. A stuffed turkey needs 4.5 to 5.5 hours to cook completely. Here are several tips to reduce the risk of the most common food-borne illnesses.

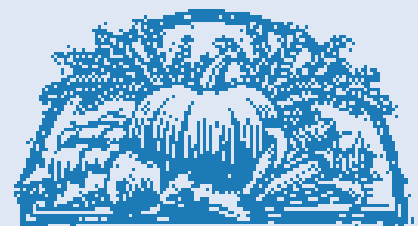
Clean: Wash hands and food-contact surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto cutting boards, knives, sponges and counter tops.

Separate: Don't cross-contaminate or let bacteria spread from one food product to another. This is especially true for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Experts caution to keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

Cook: Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long-enough time and at a high-enough temperature to kill the harmful bacteria that cause food-borne illness.

Chill: Refrigerate promptly. Public health officials advise consumers to refrigerate foods quickly because cold temperatures keep most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees F and the freezer at 0 degrees F, and the accuracy of the settings should be checked occasionally with a thermometer.

Take these and other precautions so that your holiday season is spent joyfully and not miserably. Once again, I want to thank all of our *Alive!* readers for this month's recipes. These are fantastic dishes for your Thanksgiving feast. Try them! Happy Thanksgiving!



THANKSGIVING



Baby Creamed Onions — Betty Gunther, City Clerk

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 pounds small white onions, peeled
- 6 tablespoons butter
- 3 cups milk
- 6 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper



DIRECTIONS:

Cook onions in boiled salted water for 20 minutes or until tender; drain and return to saucepan. While onions cook, melt butter over low heat. Blend in flour, salt and pepper. Cook, stirring constantly, just until bubbly. Stir in milk, continue cooking and stirring until sauce thickens and boils one minute. Pour over drained onions; heat slowly just until bubbly.

Baked Apples

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 Delicious or baking apples
- 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 3/4 cup margarine or butter
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon



DIRECTIONS:

Heat oven to 375° F. Peel upper half of each apple. Core to within 1/2 inch of bottom. Place apples in ungreased baking dish. Add 1 scant tablespoon brown sugar, 1 teaspoon margarine. Pinch freshly grated nutmeg and pinch cinnamon to center of each apple. Sprinkle remaining spices over apples. Pour 1/4 inch water into baking dish. Bake 30-40 minutes, basting occasionally. To test for doneness, pierce with fork; they should be tender.

Oldie-But-Goodie Home-Style Gravy

— Henry Morgan, Retired Club Member

INGREDIENTS:

- Pan drippings from roast turkey
- 1/4-cup all-purpose flour
- Chicken broth or water



DIRECTIONS:

Transfer turkey to a serving platter. Strain pan drippings into a large measuring cup. Skim fat from drippings; reserve. Place 1/4 cup of the fat in a medium saucepan. Stir in flour. Add enough broth or water to drippings in the measuring cup to equal 2 cups.

Add all at once to flour mixture. Cook and stir over medium heat until thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir one minute more. Season with salt and pepper. Makes two cups (8 to 10 servings). Recipe may be doubled.

Gerald's Crock Pot-Perfect Potatoes

— Gerald Higgins, Gen. Services

INGREDIENTS:

- 1/4 pound bacon, diced
- 2 medium onions, thinly sliced
- 4 medium potatoes, thinly sliced
- 1/2 pound cheddar cheese, thinly sliced
- Salt and pepper
- Butter



DIRECTIONS:

Line a crock pot with aluminum foil, leaving enough to overlap potatoes when finished. Layer half each of the bacon, onions, potatoes and cheese in the crock pot. Season to taste and dot with butter. Repeat layers of bacon, onions, potatoes and cheese. Dot with butter. Overlap with remaining foil. Cover and cook on low setting for 10 to 12 hours.

Turkeylicious Nachos

— Tina Guetierrez, Rec and Parks

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 cups cooked turkey, coarsely chopped
- Salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste
- 1 10-ounce package large tortilla chips
- 16 fluid ounces refried beans (or regular)
- 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack or Cheddar cheese
- 2 cups salsa
- Sour cream



DIRECTIONS:

Heat oven to 425°F.

Whisk together lime juice, olive oil, cumin and garlic powder; toss with turkey in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper.

Make a layer of tortilla chips to cover the bottom of a large 12- to 14-inch round or oval baking dish. Evenly spoon refried beans over chips. Top with turkey and sprinkle

with 1 cup shredded cheese.

Make another layer of tortilla chips. Spoon half the salsa evenly over chips. Top with remaining cup of cheese.

Bake nachos 15-20 minutes or until heated through and cheese melts and begins to bubble.

Serve hot with remaining salsa, sour cream and cilantro, if desired.