



Holiday Meal Planning

By Mary McDougall

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This time of year, the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays frighten many people who eat a healthy diet. They wonder how to socialize with friends and how to prepare a meal in their home. These two days are supposed to be the largest feasts of the year. Yet in fact, both dinners are the healthiest, most vegetarian-like, most McDougall-like meals people eat all year long. Traditionally, these holiday dinners consist of mashed white potatoes, roasted sweet potatoes, a bread stuffing, butternut and acorn squash, cranberries, and a variety of green vegetables, including Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, and green beans. For dessert, pumpkin pie ends the feast. That's a cornucopia of starches and vegetables. The turkey served is the leanest of all common meats. The truth is that every other dinner consumed by Westerners all year long is far richer in fat, cholesterol, salt and sugar than is eaten at these two traditional festivals. Therefore, if you are a healthy eater you will find Thanksgiving and Christmas the two most comfortable times of the year to socialize with all of your family and friends. I have laid out the menu, shopping list, and time schedule so that you will be able to more easily prepare a successful meal. The starred (*) items are ones I suggest for a basic meal plan, and then add as many more dishes as you feel your Thanksgiving dinner needs to fit your celebration.

MENU:

Creamy Pumpkin Soup (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: Prepare this up to two days ahead without the soy milk and refrigerate. Reheat in microwave or on stovetop. Add the soy milk after the soup is heated through.

Tossed Green Salad with assorted dressings

Success Tip: Prepare dressings three to four days in advance and refrigerate. Or buy your favorite non-fat salad dressings. Buy organic baby greens in bags and toss in a bowl just before serving.

*** Holiday Stuffed Pumpkin** (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: Buy pumpkin in October or early November for the best selection. Keep in a cool place. Buy extra pumpkins for use at other times during the winter months. Choose one of the many varieties available at this time of the year. One of my favorites is the "ghost" pumpkin with its white skin and orange flesh. The traditional pumpkin for carving a jack-o-lantern is not the tastiest choice for use as a stuffed pumpkin, although I have used them when nothing else was available. Clean the pumpkin the day before use and refrigerate, but do not stuff until just before baking. If you do not have enough room to refrigerate the cleaned pumpkin then clean it just before stuffing. Cube the bread the night before and allow it to sit out overnight so the bread dries out slightly. This step helps to make the stuffing mixture nicely moist, but not mushy.

*** Mashed Potatoes** (newsletter July 2004 & October 2004)

Success Tip: Peel potatoes in the morning and store in water to cover until cooking time. Drain off all cooking water. Use a handheld electric mixer and add warmed soymilk while beating. Place mashed potatoes into a warmed bowl before serving. For garlic mashed potatoes, add some of the Elephant Garlic Spread to the potatoes while mashing.

Maple Mashed Sweet Potatoes (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: These may be made two days ahead of time and refrigerated in a covered casserole dish. Reheat in microwave just before serving.

*** Golden Gravy** (newsletter October 2003)

Success Tip: This may be made a day ahead of time and reheated slowly on the stovetop, stirring frequently.

Rich Brown Gravy (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: Brown the onions and flour a day or two ahead of time, then cover and refrigerate. Finish the recipe as directed, realizing that it will take a bit more time for the liquid to heat through.

Whole Wheat & Sourdough Rolls with Elephant Garlic Spread (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: Order your rolls from Whole Foods or a bakery about one week early, then pick them up the day before the holiday. Make the garlic spread one or two days ahead of time and refrigerate until serving.

*** Cranberry Sauce** (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: Make two to three days ahead of time and refrigerate until just before serving.

*** Green Beans**

Success Tip: Trim beans the day before and store in the refrigerator. Wash just before steaming. I usually serve these plain with a bit of salt and pepper.

Brussels Sprouts with Creamy Caesar Salad Dressing (newsletter July 2003)

Success Tip: Trim these a day or two before cooking and store in the refrigerator. Wash before cooking. Most people like these best with some type of a sauce, although Heather and I like them plain with only a bit of salt. Make the dressing one to two days ahead and store in the refrigerator. Pour a small amount of the dressing over the cooked Brussels sprouts and toss just before serving.

*** Pumpkin Pie with Vanilla Cream Sauce** (newsletter October 2003)

Success Tip: Make the pie and the sauce one day ahead and refrigerate until just before serving. We like this pie best chilled. If you like warm pumpkin pie, you will need to make this just before serving. The crust can be prepared one day early and refrigerated. Mix the filling ingredients together, cover and refrigerate overnight, then pour into the crust and bake. The vanilla sauce should be served chilled over the pie.

Wicked Chocolate Pie (newsletter October 2004)

Success Tip: Make this one day early and refrigerate. The toppings may be made two days ahead, if desired. This needs to be served chilled.

SHOPPING TIPS:

Shop for the non-perishable items about a week ahead of time. These are the canned and packaged products, such as vegetable broth, canned pumpkin, flour, silken tofu and any dried herbs and spices that you may need. Potatoes, sweet potatoes and garlic can be purchased ahead of time as long as you have a cool place to store them (not the refrigerator). Choose the menu items that you want to include for your Thanksgiving feast, then look through the recipes. Check over this shopping list as you go through the recipes, and make sure you also have the pantry items available. Shop for your perishable items no more than 2 days before the holiday, if possible.

SHOPPING LIST

The following shopping lists are for the complete menu above. You will have to adjust the items needed depending on what you plan to prepare.

CANNED AND PACKAGED PRODUCTS

These may be purchased ahead of time and stored in your pantry or refrigerator.

4-5 boxes (32 oz.) vegetable broth
2 cans (15-16 oz.) pumpkin
1 jar (12 oz.) applesauce
3 containers (32 oz.) soy or rice milk
1 jar (8 oz.) pure maple syrup
5 packages (12.3 oz.) Lite Silken Tofu-Extra Firm
2 cups non-dairy chocolate chips
1 bag (16 oz.) Sucanat
1 jar (16 oz.) Wonderslim Fat Replacer
1 bag (16 oz.) frozen raspberries
1 cup unsalted roasted cashews
1 cup sliced almonds
1 container (32 oz.) orange juice
1 jar (4 oz.) capers

FRESH INGREDIENTS

The first nine ingredients may be purchased ahead of time. Buy the fresh vegetables and bread products the day before, if possible.

4 onions
1 bunch celery
1 head garlic
2 heads elephant garlic
5 pounds potatoes
3 pounds yams or sweet potatoes
1 bag fresh cranberries
1 small pumpkin (to serve the soup in-optional)
1 medium-large pumpkin
Bagged organic baby greens
2 pounds green beans
2 pounds Brussels sprouts
1 large loaf whole wheat bread
6-8 whole wheat or sourdough rolls

PANTRY ITEMS NEEDED

These are used in several of the recipes and are things that you probably already have in your pantry. Check over this list and purchase anything that you don't have.

Tabasco sauce
Curry powder
Soy sauce (at least 1 cup)
Tahini
Vanilla
Whole wheat flour
Unbleached white flour
Cornstarch
Salt
Black pepper
Golden brown sugar
Sugar
Dijon mustard
Pumpkin pie spice
Cinnamon
Ground ginger
Ground cloves
Parsley flakes

Sage
Marjoram
Thyme
Bay leaves
Poultry seasoning
Rosemary
Soy Parmesan cheese
Lemon juice

TIME SCHEDULE

1 week ahead:

Shop for non-perishable items and some of the perishable foods listed above.
Order rolls from bakery.

3 days ahead:

Make salad dressings.
Make cranberry sauce.

2 days ahead:

Shop for vegetables and whole wheat bread.
Make Creamy Pumpkin Soup.
Bake sweet potatoes or yams and prepare Maple Mashed Sweet Potatoes.
Make Elephant Garlic Spread.
Make Creamy Caesar Salad Dressing.
Make the raspberry sauce and the almond topping for the chocolate pie.

1 day ahead:

Pick up the pre-ordered rolls.
Make the pumpkin pie and vanilla sauce.
Make the chocolate pie.
Trim the green beans and Brussels sprouts.
Make the Golden Gravy.
Partially make the brown gravy.
Cube the bread and allow to sit out overnight

Thanksgiving
(Morning):

Peel potatoes and place in cold water to cover.
Clean out pumpkins.
Make stuffing mixture and stuff pumpkin.

Thanksgiving
(Afternoon):

Take sweet potatoes and soup out of refrigerator.
Place pumpkin in oven and bake as directed.
Cook potatoes and mash.
Wash vegetables and cook.
Finish brown gravy and slowly reheat Golden Gravy.

Reheat mashed sweet potatoes.

Finish soup and heat.

Place baby greens in bowl. Serve with dressings.

Heat rolls and garlic spread.

Don't forget the cranberry sauce.

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