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Holiday Prep Countdown

Are you having guests over for Thanksgiving or another holiday meal? This handy guide will help you get your home prepped and your turkey, sides, and desserts on the table with as little stress as possible.



Four weeks ahead

You'll find that hosting the holiday will be easier if you start planning at least a month before the big day. The more you can get done in advance, the less you'll need to do when the big day is near. Start with these tasks:

- Draw up your guest list and send out invites.
- Plan your menu and write your shopping list.
- Research where to order your meal if you prefer a prepared holiday spread.
- Assemble your decor, cutlery, plates, and napkins.
- Make and freeze your cookie and pie dough.

### **Three weeks ahead**

If you are hosting a potluck for your holiday meal, reach out to your guests to determine who will be bringing the main dish, side dishes, and desserts. Give your home's kitchen, entertaining areas, and guest bedroom and bathroom a deep clean.

### **Two weeks ahead**

Shop for nonperishables and frozen foods, such as canned vegetables, jarred condiments, pasta, rice, frozen rolls, coffee, tea, and other beverages. Make room in your fridge and freezer for the main meal, and ensure that you have containers for leftovers.

### **One week before**

Buy your turkey if you'll be purchasing a frozen one, and defrost it in your refrigerator. A four-to-twelve-pound turkey will need one to three days to thaw out, and a twelve- to sixteen-pound turkey will require at least four days.

### **Five days before**

Defrost your pie and cookie dough in the fridge.

### **Three days before**

Buy perishable foods, such as fresh vegetables and fruit, herbs, eggs, and milk. Make your cranberry sauce, and prepare homemade stock for sides like stuffing and gravy. Store them in the refrigerator until Thanksgiving arrives.

### Two days before

If you'll be preparing a fresh turkey, purchase it today. Prepare casserole dishes. Bake pies and cookies. Buy ice for beverages. Do a light cleaning of your house.

### One day before

Chop fresh celery, onions, and other vegetables for your stuffing and side dishes, and store them in the refrigerator. Prepare appetizers like deviled eggs and cheese balls. Cube and toast bread for stuffing, and store at room temperature. Chill your drinks, set your dining table, and ensure your home is ready for entertaining.

### Thanksgiving day

Roast your turkey—you'll need about one hour for every four pounds. Make your potatoes, gravy, and stuffing. Heat up your casserole dishes. Set out your meal, and enjoy!

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