

Thanksgiving Countdown: Get Ready For The Big Day!

Early November

- Invite guests, and if others will be bringing dishes keep track of who is bringing what
- Plan out your menu (you can use this [printable menu planner](#))
- Create your grocery and shopping list (you can use this [printable list](#))
- Order anything you'll need for the big day, such as a fresh turkey or a table centerpiece
- Make a preliminary decision about your table decorations

Two weeks prior

- Begin getting table decorations ready, including cleaning or polishing silver, fine china and glassware, and ironing tablecloths and napkins
- Shop for nonperishable items from your grocery list
- Clean out refrigerator to make room for Thanksgiving items
- Plan what serving dishes or platters will be used to serve each menu item, and use something like an index card to label and designate each dishes use
- Plan for leftovers, including organizing food storage containers and ways to allow guests to take leftovers home
- Create any non-perishable table decorations, such as place cards, centerpiece, fold napkins, etc.
- Plan seating arrangements for all guests, and confirm have enough chairs, plates, glasses, etc.

One week prior

- Create a cooking schedule for the few days prior to Thanksgiving, and by the hour for Thanksgiving day (you can use this [printable schedule](#))
- Check thawing time for your frozen turkey ([read this article for tips](#))
- Prepare guests rooms and guests areas for company
- Clean house, including any decorations or clean up on the exterior of your home

4-3 days prior

- Begin to defrost your turkey (depends on the size, so check the article above for tips)
- Confirm what guests are bringing, including serving dishes to be used and cooking or heating needed for those dishes
- Continue any cleaning or decorating that can be done ahead of time

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2 days ahead

- Grocery shop for perishable items
- Chill beverages
- Any prep ahead cooking or preparation of ingredients that can be done today, especially from recently bought perishable ingredients

1 day ahead

- Continue prep ahead cooking or prepping ingredients to the extent possible
- Confirm everything in house, including in bathrooms, is ready for guests
- Confirm house cleaning tasks done, especially in kitchen and any rooms where guests will be entertained
- Set table, including with table decorations
- Set out all serving dishes, in order, where they will be used
- Create drink station for guests use during the day and for the meal itself

Thanksgiving day

- Fill condiment dishes (refrigerate as necessary until time for use)
- Assign family members to help with guests, including answering door, taking coats, serving drinks, etc.
- Cook the majority of the meal (use your hour by hour schedule you created earlier to make sure you stay on track)
- Clean up kitchen as much as you can, as you cook
- After cooking, add to the serving dishes, and have others help you add food and drinks to the table
- Enjoy dinner with family and friends

Cleanup

- Gather linens, such as napkins and tablecloths for laundering, and wash them
- Add as much stuff to the dishwasher as possible
- Put away leftovers, including creating packages for guests to take some home, and refrigerate all leftovers
- Hand wash pots, pans, and anything else that can't be washed in the dishwasher
- Clear kitchen counters and clean them
- Make sure to return (after washing) any borrowed items, such as serving pieces, dishes, or other items
- Put away dishes, serving pieces and glassware

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