

Thanksgiving is about more than just turkey. It's also about variety and indulgence. While you can't beat the classics, here are few recipes that you can incorporate into your traditional holiday feast — from sweet to savory.

HOLIDAY HISTORY

• In 1621, the Plymouth colonists and the Wampanoag shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn't until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

• The Thanksgiving celebration centers on cooking and sharing a bountiful meal with family and friends. Turkey, a Thanksgiving staple so ubiquitous it has become all but synonymous with the holiday, may or may not have been on offer when the Pilgrims hosted the inaugural feast.

• Today, however, nearly 90 percent of Americans eat the bird — whether roasted, baked or deep-fried — on Thanksgiving, according to the National Turkey Federation.

• Volunteering is a common Thanksgiving Day activity, and communities often hold food drives and host free dinners for the less fortunate.

• Presented by Macy's department store since 1924, New York City's Thanksgiving Day parade attracts some 2 to 3 million spectators along its 2.5-mile route and draws an enormous TV audience.

• There are four towns in the United States named "Turkey." They can be found in Arizona, Texas, Louisiana and North Carolina.

• The average number of calories consumed on Thanksgiving is 4,500.

• Butterball answers more than 100,000 turkey-cooking questions via their Butterball Turkey Hotline each November and December.

• The tradition of football on Thanksgiving began in 1876 with a game between Yale and Princeton. The first NFL games were played on Thanksgiving in 1920.



Around the table



RECIPES FOR THANKSGIVING

COCO NUTTY PUMPKIN PIE

This recipe takes pumpkin pie up several notches. A cross between a coconut cream pie and pumpkin pie, it's a fantastic holiday dessert. It's creamy — it has the texture of a coconut cream pie — with hints of pumpkin. The addition of pecans and coconut is an added treat. The pie doesn't have the traditional pumpkin spice, so even those pumpkin pie haters will like this (we think). Hints of cinnamon linger in your mouth after each bite. It's a pretty pie for your holiday table.

- INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 cup pure pumpkin (not pie filling)
 - 1 cup brown sugar
 - 1 teaspoon salt
 - ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
 - ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans
 - 1 can Carnation evaporated milk (12 ounces)
 - ½ cup milk
 - 2 eggs, blended
 - 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 - ½ cup shredded coconut
 - One 9-inch unbaked pie shell

- DIRECTIONS:**
1. Preheat oven to 400.
 2. Have prepared pie shell ready.
 3. In a small bowl mix the eggs.
 4. In a large bowl add all of the ingredients, including eggs, and mix well.
 5. Pour the pumpkin mixture into your pie shell.
 6. Bake at 400 for 5 minutes. Turn oven down to 350 degree and continue cooking for approximately 55-60 minutes until set. Don't forget to put foil around your crust to keep it from getting too dark.

CORNBREAD DRESSING

A traditional Thanksgiving side is cornbread dressing, and this is a great one. It's moist without being too wet and holds together without being too hard. One flavor does not overpower another — they're balanced perfectly. Once baked, the side dish is a beautiful golden brown and will be a fantastic addition to any holiday table.

- INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 large skillet of cornbread (2 boxes of Jiffy brand works great)
 - 4 cups cubed white bread
 - 6 eggs, beaten well
 - 1½ cups finely chopped celery
 - 1 large onion, finely chopped
 - ½ stick butter or margarine, to saute
 - 2 teaspoons dried sage (McCormicks)
 - One 6-ounce box cornbread stuffing mix
 - 4 cans chicken stock (14.5 ounces each)
- DIRECTIONS:**
1. Preheat oven to 425. Saute onions and celery in butter/margarine until tender.
 2. In a very large bowl crumble your cooled cornbread. Add bread cubes, box of stuffing mix and sage.
 3. Add cooked onions and celery.
 4. Beat eggs in separate container until well mixed, then add to cornbread mixture.
 5. Begin adding chicken stock until your mixture has the consistency of thick pancake batter, mixing well.



6. Pour into two greased 9-by-13-inch pans and bake at 425 degrees until lightly browned on top, about 45 minutes. If possible, make this a day ahead and keep in the fridge to allow all the flavors to incorporate.

EASY MACARONI AND CHEESE BITES

These mac and cheese bites are cheesy, crispy, and delicious. The mix of Monterey Jack and cheddar cheeses makes these bites nice and cheesy. And by adding the Dijon mustard, it gives a slight tang to the bites. Smoky bacon is the perfect topping. By coating the tins with bread crumbs, they really do come out easy, but it also adds a slight crunch to the mac and cheese.

- INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 - ¼ cup Panko bread crumbs, seasoned or plain
 - 2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
 - 1 egg, beaten
 - 2 cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese, divided in half
 - 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 - 4 strips bacon, cooked crisp and crumbled
 - ½ teaspoon salt
 - 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard (optional)
 - 1 cup whole milk
 - 1 teaspoon finely chopped parsley (½ teaspoon dry)
- DIRECTIONS:**
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees and grease mini muffin tin generously with butter or non-stick spray.
 2. Coat insides of mini-muffin tin with bread crumbs (to help the bites hold their shape).
 3. Bring large pot of lightly salted water to a boil and add macaroni. Cook 4-5 minutes, just until softened but not cooked through. Remove from heat, drain and return to pot.
 4. Stir in butter and egg until pasta is evenly coated.
 5. Mix in bacon, mustard, milk, salt and cheeses (reserving 1 cup Jack cheese).
 6. Then spoon into muffin tin, press filling gently with fingers (to help



- the bites hold their shape). Top with reserved cheese.
7. Bake 15-20 minutes or until top is golden brown.
 8. Allow muffins to cool slightly before removing from pan. Garnish with parsley and enjoy.

BAKED BRIE WITH CRANBERRY SAUCE

This is a simple, but elegant, appetizer that will please just about anyone on Thanksgiving (or at any point in the holiday season). The buttery Brie is creamy when it melts, and its savory flavor is a nice contrast to the tart cranberries. Walnuts add a nice crunch. When you're limited on time, this quick and easy appetizer can be put together in a snap.

- INGREDIENTS:**
- 1 full round Brie cheese
 - ½ cup cranberry sauce, whole berry
 - ¼ cup roughly chopped walnuts
- DIRECTIONS:**
1. Preheat oven to 400.
 2. Place room temperature Brie in a small round casserole as close to the size of the cheese round as possible.
 3. Top Brie with cranberry sauce, then top with the walnuts.
 4. Cover tightly with foil and bake approximately 10 minutes. Brie should be fully melted. Bake a little



5. Serve warm with a selection of your choice of sliced French bread, crackers, or pear and apple slices.