

A TIME TO GIVE THANKS

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Thanksgiving has always been a favorite holiday of mine but not because of the food. Don't get me wrong I love the turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy, and pumpkin pie! But, there is always something special about getting together with family and friends and creating memories to last a lifetime.

Thanksgiving is about gratitude. It is about being thankful and appreciating those we have in our lives. Often the focus of Thanksgiving is on the hours of meal preparation, which for many makes the holiday a stressful time. Here are some ways to make the Thanksgiving meal a little less stressful and more simple this year.

- 1. Plan ahead.** Locate your serving dishes and utensils, decide what the menu will entail and create a shopping list of what you will need to purchase. Food cost is on the rise so budget accordingly.
- 2. Keep the Menu Simple.** You don't have to make tons of different desserts, side dishes and entrees. Pick some family favorites and what you feel comfortable cooking. I'm sure most will enjoy whatever is made.
- 3. You don't have to have the traditional meal.** Maybe your family/friends don't like the traditional thanksgiving meal. No problem. Make a meal you all will enjoy and remember it is less about the food and more about the quality time spent with each other.

- 4. Plan two shopping trips.** You will likely forget something. Plan for it no matter how thorough you are. On your first trip purchase all your nonperishable items and whatever can keep for a longer time. You will likely want to get your Turkey on this run. Plan your second trip a few days before the holiday, but make sure to keep a running list of the items you still need to ensure you get everything on your list.
- 5. Ask everyone to bring a dish to share.** To make it easier and less stressful ask those invited to bring a dish to pass. Have a sign-up sheet so you know what everyone else is bringing.
- 6. Cut Foods and make some dishes ahead of time.** Many of your dishes can actually be made a day or two in advance and kept in the refrigerator. This saves time the day of Thanksgiving. All you need to do is warm those dishes in the oven and then you can focus on your main entrée, such as your turkey. Your turkey will need at least a few days to defrost so make sure to take it out of the freezer in advance.
- 7. It's okay to take a shortcut or two.** Not everything has to be homemade. It's okay to buy some already prepared foods. It's important to know your limits when it comes to cooking. You want the day to be enjoyable too.
- 8. Limit your plans that day.** Jumping from family function to family function can be exhausting. Make your day less stressful by limiting how many places you go. It is always nice to see everyone but coordinating times, meals, travel can all make for a long day. Black Friday shopping is getting earlier and earlier these days and taking away from the actual meaning of Thanksgiving. Avoid shopping on Thanksgiving. You can always go the next day instead if you wish.

No matter what your plans are this Thanksgiving take time to enjoy the community of people around you. Maybe you are working, going to a family function, running a turkey trot or helping serve a community meal. Nonetheless, there is so much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. Wishing you all a Happy Thanksgiving!

