

It's time for most of us to start thinking about our Thanksgiving menus, and many times it feels like the menu for Thanksgiving has been decided for us. This year, if you wanted to keep a traditional menu, but with a bit of a twist, we have a few ideas to help you mix it up! See if any of these are destined to become part of your new tradition!

Cranberry Stuffed Turkey Breasts

*Prep Time: 45 min.
Cook Time: 1 hr.
Additional Time: 15 min.
Total Time: 2 hrs.
Servings: 10*

1 (12 oz.) package herb-seasoned bread stuffing mix
2 skinless boneless turkey breasts
1 C. chopped pecans
2 (8 oz.) packages dried, sweetened cranberries
2 T. olive oil
6 lettuce leaves
1/2 C. pecan halves

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Prepare stuffing mix according to package directions. Set aside to cool.

With a sharp knife, butterfly breasts open to lay flat. Place each breast between two sheets of waxed paper, and flatten with a mallet. Spread the prepared stuffing to within 1/4 inch of the edge of each breast. Sprinkle each one with chopped pecans and dried cranberries, reserving some of the cranberries for garnish. Roll up tightly in a jellyroll style, starting with the long end. Tuck in ends, and tie in sections with string, about 4 sections around the middle and one running the length of the roll to secure the ends.

Heat olive oil in a large cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. Carefully brown rolls on all sides.

Place skillet in oven, uncovered. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven for 1 hour, or until the internal temperature is at 170°F when taken with a meat thermometer. Do not let these get overly dry.

Allow rolls to set for 15 min. before removing string, and slicing into 1/2 to 3/4 inch circles. Leave one roll whole, and slice the other for presentation. Stuffing will be spiraled into meat. Present on your prettiest platter on a bed of curly lettuce, and garnish by sprinkling with the remaining 1/2 C. pecan halves and the reserved dried cranberries.

Better-Than-Boxed Gluten-Free Stuffing

*Prep Time: 10 min.
Cook Time: 25 min.
Additional Time: 5 min.
Total Time: 40 min.
Servings: 8*

16 oz. vegan, gluten-free bread, cubed
1/2 C. butter
1 C. diced celery
1 C. diced onion
1 T. dried parsley
1 T. dried sage
1 tsp., ground thyme
3/4 tsp. garlic powder
3/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
1/4 tsp. dried rosemary
1/4 tsp. dried marjoram
2 C. vegetable broth
aluminum foil

Preheat the oven to 350 °F. Spread bread cubes out onto 2 baking sheets.

Bake in the preheated oven until bread cubes are dry and lightly toasted, about 10 min. Transfer to a large mixing bowl.

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Add celery and onion and sauté until vegetables are softened but celery still has a bit of snap, about 5 min. Season with parsley, sage, thyme, garlic powder, salt, pepper, rosemary, and marjoram. Cook and stir for 1 more min. Stir in vegetable stock and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. After it reaches a boil, remove from heat.

Pour stock, vegetable, and herb mixture over bread cubes in the mixing bowl. Stir gently until well combined. Cover the bowl with aluminum foil and let sit for 5 min. Remove foil, fluff stuffing with a fork, and serve.

Green Beans with Feta and Bacon

*Prep Time: 10 min.
Cook Time: 15 min.
Total Time: 25 min.
Servings: 6*

8 slices bacon
1 (16 oz.) package frozen cut green beans
2 T. water
1 tsp. minced garlic
4 oz. crumbled feta cheese, divided
1/2 tsp. onion powder
1/8 tsp. black pepper

Place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium high heat until evenly browned but only slightly crisp. Drain grease, leaving a small amount in the skillet for later use. Crumble bacon, reserving 2 T. for garnish, and set aside.

Cook frozen beans with water in a covered, microwavable dish for about 3 min. until thawed, but not fully cooked. Drain liquid, pat dry, and set aside.

Reheat skillet with reserved bacon grease over medium-high heat. Stir in bacon and garlic until garlic is lightly golden. Add green beans and feta cheese; season with onion powder and black pepper. Cook and stir until most of the feta cheese has melted, about 2 min.

Transfer green bean mixture to a serving dish, and garnish with remaining feta cheese and crumbled bacon. Serve hot.

Sweet Potato Cupcakes w/ Toasted Marshmallow Frosting

Prep Time: 25 min.

Cook Time: 20 min.

Additional Time: 1 hr.

Total Time: 1 hr. 45 min.

Servings: 12

Sweet Potato Cupcakes:

1-1/2 C. brown sugar
1/2 C. butter, room temperature
2 lg. eggs, room temperature
1 C. cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 C. all-purpose flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground ginger
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1/2 C. milk, room temperature

Marshmallow Frosting:

1/3 C. white sugar
2 lg. egg whites
3 T. cold water
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
1 pinch salt
1/2 C. marshmallow creme
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Gather the ingredients. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line 12 muffin cups with cupcake liners.

Beat brown sugar and butter with an electric mixer in a large bowl until light and fluffy. Add room-temperature eggs one at a time, allowing each egg to blend into butter mixture before adding the next. Blend in sweet potatoes and vanilla extract.

Whisk flour, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, baking soda, 1/2 tsp. salt, nutmeg, and cloves in a bowl. Add 1/2 of the flour to sweet potato mixture, stirring just until incorporated. Blend in milk and remaining flour mixture.

Scoop batter into prepared cupcake pan and bake in preheated oven until tops spring back when touched lightly with a finger and a toothpick inserted in the center of a cupcake comes out clean, 18 to 22 min. Cool on rack.

Frosting: Combine white sugar, egg whites, cold water, cream of tartar, and a pinch of salt in a heatproof mixing bowl. Set the mixing bowl over a pan of simmering water and beat with an electric mixer until the mixture is very hot to the touch and stiff peaks have formed, 5 to 7 min. Remove the bowl from the heat and beat 1 min. more. Add marshmallow creme and 1 tsp. vanilla extract; beat until combined.

To frost the cupcakes: fill a pastry bag fitted with a large plain tip with frosting; pipe mini marshmallow-shaped dots all over the cupcakes. Alternatively, use a knife and frost them generously with lots of swoops and swirls.

Set oven rack about 6 inches from the heat source and preheat the oven's broiler. Arrange 3 or 4 cupcakes on a baking sheet and place them in the oven under the broiler. Toast until frosting has started to brown, about 90 seconds (check every 20 seconds and rearrange the baking sheet, if necessary). Repeat with the remaining cupcakes until all are toasted.

Upside-Down Pumpkin Cake

Prep Time: 10 min.

Cook Time: 1 hr.

Total Time: 1 hr. 10 min.

Servings: 8

1 (29 oz.) can pumpkin puree
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground cloves
salt to taste
1-3/4 C. white sugar
3 eggs
1 (12 oz.) can evaporated milk
1 (18.25 oz.) package yellow cake mix with pudding
1 C. chopped pecans
1 C. butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a mixing bowl, blend pumpkin, cinnamon, cloves, salt, sugar, eggs, and milk. Pour mixture into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Sprinkle dry cake mix and nuts over the batter. Pour melted butter over the cake.

Bake in the preheated oven for 60 min., then let cool. The cake will be liquidy at first, but will solidify as it cools.

Butter Pecan Cheesecake

Prep Time: 20 min.

Cook Time: 1 hr.

Additional Time: 1 hr.

Total Time: 2 hrs. 20 min.

Servings: 12

Crust:

1-1/2 C. graham cracker crumbs
1/2 C. chopped pecans
1/3 C. butter, melted
1/3 C. white sugar

Cake:

3 (8 oz.) packages cream cheese, softened
1/2 C. white sugar
3 eggs
2 C. sour cream
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 C. chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 475°F

Combine graham cracker crumbs, 1/2 C. pecans, butter, and 1/3 C. white sugar in a food processor; pulse until evenly combined. Press mixture in the bottom and partly up the sides of a 9-inch springform pan.

Beat cream cheese and 1/2 C. white sugar together in a bowl using an electric mixer until smooth and creamy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Add sour cream and vanilla extract and mix well; fold in 1 C. pecans. Pour cream cheese mixture over crust.

Bake in the preheated oven for 10 min. Reduce oven to 300°F and continue baking for 50 min. more. Turn off oven, open door slightly, and let cake sit in oven for 1 hour.

Quote of the Week:

"I've lived the literal meaning of the 'Land of the Free' and 'Home of the Brave.' It's not corny for me. I feel it in my heart. I feel it in my chest."

~ Chris Kyle, U.S. Navy SEAL Sniper, April 8, 1974-February 2, 2013