

An American Thanksgiving Dinner Checklist

If you are hosting a big feast this Thanksgiving, let me share some advice and strategies for making the event a little easier on you. Try to keep everything in perspective, remember what is most important; to be with family and friends and appreciate all of your wonderful blessings.



1. Don't try to do it alone

Just because I love to cook, doesn't mean I have to do it all! If anyone volunteers to bring something, I take them up on it. I also try to involve the kids with the preparation, either by asking them to decorate the table, clean the house, or get some type of entertainment ready for our guests such as videos, games, and music.

2. Make a menu ahead of time

By the Sunday before the feast, I make a list of everything we are serving, from appetizers to coffee. I take note of who is making each item, plan my week, and jot down my to-do-list on my calendar.

3. Grocery shop early

I make a detailed grocery list and buy the groceries by Tuesday, so I can start cooking on Wednesday.

4. Cook in advance

Most of my dishes can be cooked well in advance of dinner, and then warmed before the meal. Remember keep it simple, do not try to pull a Martha Stewart.

5. Get your home and table ready the night before

To avoid exhaustion on the big day, I make sure the house looks presentable and the table is set before I go to bed on Wednesday. (That usually means around 1:00 am!)

6. Keep appetizers easy

Before dinner, I serve simple foods, such as gyozas (pot stickers), sushi, nuts, vegetables and dip, and sometimes even chips and salsa!

7. Have plastic containers ready so you can pack up leftovers

This makes clean-up easier and your guests can take a little extra home to give them a break from cooking the next day.

8. Take the last thirty minutes off

I always try to hold sacred the last half hour before guests arrive. This is the time I use to get myself cleaned up and enjoy my home surroundings. I put on my favorite jazz CD and enjoy a glass of wine. That way I'm not incredibly exhausted before the evening begins.

9. Give thanks

After sitting down, I ask each guest to share one thing for which they are thankful. This simple tradition really sets the right mood. We pray and give thanks to those who proudly serve our country, we remember our family and friends, and we remember our loved ones who are unable to be with us. Then we enjoy the feast we've all helped to prepare. Happy Thanksgiving everyone!