



# Stress-free holiday meal planning

Take the stress out of this year's holiday meals by planning ahead. Use our handy holiday meal planning guide to get everything done and still have time to relax and enjoy the day.

## 2 WEEKS BEFORE

1. **Get organized:** Get a folder to organize recipes, shopping lists and guests contributions for easy reference.
2. **Plan your menu:** Keep in mind any dietary constraints, food allergies of guests or family food preferences when choosing items for the menu. Suggest that guests bring a dish to lessen your burden.
3. **Prepare your shopping list:** Check your cupboards and jot down any needed ingredients and spices in your folder. Make room in your refrigerator for turkey defrosting and dishes you cook in advance.
4. **Decide on a main dish:** If you choose a fresh turkey or buy a frozen one, plan on 1 to 1 1/2 lbs. of turkey per person. For other meats consult your butcher for an appropriate amount.

## 1 WEEK BEFORE

1. **Defrost turkey:** If cooking a turkey, place it in a shallow pan in the refrigerator. Be sure not to unwrap it from the plastic. Don't defrost meats on the counter for risk of bacterial contamination.
2. **Confirm with guests:** Remind family members and guests about arrival time and meal contributions they agreed to bring.
3. **Shop for groceries:** Buy all non-perishable items, such as drinks, baking mixes, powders, canned food, spices, evaporated milk, etc.
4. **Seating:** Confirm that you have enough tables and chairs. If you need additional seating arrangements, reserve from a party store or borrow from friends and neighbors.

## 3 DAYS BEFORE

1. **Ready your serveware:** Make sure you have enough cutlery, glasses, mugs, napkins, and place setting items for your guests.
2. **Locate your cooking equipment:** Meat thermometer, turkey baster, skewers, kitchen string, foil, and place them inside your roaster or in a dedicated cabinet.
3. **Bake desserts:** Bake any desserts to store in the fridge or freezer.

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## 2 DAYS BEFORE

1. **Pick up your meat if you ordered it:** Timing matters so don't forget this important task.
2. **Shop for remaining items:** Avoid stressful, last minute emergency trips to the store and recheck your recipes. Purchase fresh vegetables and herbs, centerpiece flowers, and other perishable items or anything you forgot.
3. **Prep ingredients:** Chop, slice, measure ingredients for each dish and place in labeled containers.

## 1 DAY BEFORE

1. **Review your "To Do List":** Sit in a comfortable chair and review your "To Do List".
2. **Set the table and decorate:** Enlist the help of others to accomplish this time-intensive task. Doing this the day before saves a lot of stress and allows you to focus on your cooking.
3. **Prepare side dishes and appetizers:** Make finger-foods and side dishes and refrigerate for reheating the next day.

## DAY OF THE MEAL

1. **Ice run:** Buy ice and last minute items. Load coolers with drinks and ice so they'll be cold when guests arrive.
1. **Get the meat going:** Depending on your choice of meat and cooking method you may have to start the process early in the day.
2. **Prepare any remaining side dishes:** Use the time after the meat is started to make any last minute dishes.
3. **Monitor cooking of meat:** Make sure to check any slow-cook meats for adequate temperature.
4. **Reheat appetizers:** Use a microwave to reheat and serve to arriving guests.
5. **Ready side dishes:** Allow enough time to reheat your side dishes before the meal so they remain hot while being served. After reheating, cover the food with plastic wrap or lids to keep food warm.
6. **Carve and plate your meat:** Carve and plate your meat, place side dishes and enjoy a healthy meal. And assign the task of cleaning the dishes to someone else!