

My never fail Thanksgiving Dinner:

NOTE: I usually also bake a turkey breast or two (depending on the size of the family or charter requirement) so that ensures plenty of white meat will be available at meal and for sandwiches etc for later on, and I will include that recipe here at the end.

I generally follow the rule of 12 to 15 minutes per pound if the bird has stuffing in the cavity. A little less if no stuffing is involved. (I always choose to NOT stuff my birds and make stuffing and bake separately. I have also included here a no bake and baked version) My recipe below makes enough stuffing for a 16 to 20-pound bird.

The Bird:

- 1 (14 to 16-pound) turkey, innards removed and reserved , neck reserved for gravy
- 1 large piece cheesecloth
- 1/2 stick unsalted butter, melted
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 stalks celery, washed and sliced into 1-inch pieces
- 2 large onions, peeled, halved, and sliced
- 1 head garlic
- 2 sprigs fresh sage, stemmed and coarsely chopped
- 4 bay leaves
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 fennel bulb sliced

The Gravy:

- 7 cups low-sodium chicken stock
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup dry marsala, or sherry
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour and 2 tablespoons soft butter mixed together

The No Bake Stuffing:

- 1 stick unsalted butter, divided
- 1 pound loose pork sausage, broken into small pieces
- 6 cups 1-inch cubed sourdough bread, crusts and all

For the Turkey: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Transfer the turkey to a roasting pan, fitted with a roasting rack if desired, and soak the cheesecloth in the butter. Season the bird with salt and pepper. Brush any remaining butter on top of the bird and cover the breasts with the cheesecloth to prevent the top skin from burning before it is cooked. Place the celery, fennel, onions, garlic, sage, bay, and rosemary in and around the turkey in the roasting pan - these will be used to make the stuffing when everything is roasted.

Place the roasting pan in the center of the oven. Cook for about 12 minutes per pound. After about 2 hours of cooking, remove the cheesecloth from the top of the breasts and return the turkey to the oven to cook for 1 more hour. If the tips of the wings start to get too dark, cover with foil to prevent them from burning.

For the Gravy: Place the neck and the chicken stock in a pot and simmer gently on top of the stove as the turkey finishes cooking. The stock should reduce by about half. Season with salt and pepper.

NOTE: How do you know when the turkey is done? The temperature of the thigh meat (where the meat is thickest and takes the longest time to cook) should register 165 degrees F when tested with a thermometer. When done, remove the bird from the oven, transfer it to a flat surface (or serving platter), and allow it to rest for 20 to 30 minutes before removing the vegetables for stuffing and carving the meat.

For the Stuffing: Heat a large skillet and add half a stick of butter. Add the sausage and cook until brown and crispy. Reserve any grease and set the sausage in a large bowl with the roasted vegetables from the turkey tray. Add the remaining butter to the pan. Add the cubed sourdough bread and cook, stirring, until they toast golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes. Toss and season with salt and pepper before adding to the bowl with the vegetables. Stir everything together and taste for seasoning, adjusting if necessary.

For the Gravy: Unless the bottom of the roasting pan is burned, you can make delicious gravy. Place the roasting pan over the burners of the stove (or pour into a large suate pan getting ALL the yummy bits you can off the bottom) add the mustard and Marsala to the pan, and warm it over low heat. Scrape the bottom to get the drippings and tasty bits off of the pan as the Marsala reduces. Strain the neck out from the stock and pour about 1/2 cup into a small bowl.

Reduce the Marsala until there is almost no liquid. Add the remaining hot chicken stock and add the flour/butter mixture in little globs to the roasting pan. Whisk to blend. Taste for seasoning. Reduce until the mixture thickens. Transfer to a gravy boat.

Allow the turkey to rest for 15 to 20 minutes before carving. Serve sliced turkey with stuffing (dressing) on the side.

My version of Holiday Green Bean Casserole

The Green Beans:

- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 1 pound string beans, ends trimmed, beans cut in half
- Ice cubes

The Mushroom Base:

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 12 ounces white mushrooms, washed, sandy ends removed, and sliced into 1/2-inch slices
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and minced (or put through a garlic press)
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup sour cream

The Shallots:

- 4 cups canola oil
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper

- 3 medium shallots, peeled and cut into thin rounds
- Kosher salt

For the green beans: Bring 6 quarts of water to a boil in a large pot. When the water boils, add the salt to the water and then add the green beans. Cook for 4 minutes.

Prepare an ice bath: Fill a large bowl halfway with ice cubes and add some cold water. Place a colander squarely inside the ice bath. The colander will keep you from having to pick the beans out from amongst the ice cubes in the ice bath. When the beans are cooked, remove them from the hot water with a strainer and transfer them to the colander inside the ice bath. Use a spoon to swirl the beans around in the ice bath so they are sure to cool down immediately. Drain and set aside.

For the mushroom base: In a 10-inch cast iron skillet, melt the butter and add the mushrooms. Season with salt, to taste, and add the cayenne and mustard. Stir to blend and cook until the mushrooms give off most of their liquid, 5 to 8 minutes. Using a whisk, add the garlic and flour to the mushrooms. When all of the flour has been incorporated, add the chicken stock. Bring to a simmer. Taste for seasoning. Stir in the cream and sour cream and simmer gently. Continue cooking over low heat until the mixture thickens, 12 to 15 minutes.

For the shallots: Pour the oil into a medium frying pan. Heat to 350 degrees F.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour and cayenne. Toss the shallot rounds in the flour and shake off the excess by shaking the rounds in a strainer once they have been floured. Test the oil by dropping in 1 shallot slice. It should begin to bubble and fry gradually.

Prepare a baking sheet fitted with a kitchen towel. Drop a small batch of the shallots into the oil and gently swirl the oil as they fry. This will help them fry more evenly on all sides. When they are light to medium brown, remove them with a slotted spoon and lay them out on the kitchen towel to cool. Sprinkle with a touch of salt.

To assemble: Stir the green beans and some of the shallots into the mushrooms. Simmer on the stove, over low heat until the green beans become tender when pierced with the tip of a knife, 10 to 15 minutes. When ready to serve, top with all of the remaining shallots.

Cranberry Tangerine Relish

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large Spanish onion, finely diced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 3 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
- 2 cups tangerine juice (fresh squeezed or I buy from Wholefoods)
- 1/4 cup light brown sugar
- 1 pound cranberries
- 2 tangerines, segmented
- 1 tablespoon grated tangerine zest

Melt butter in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, and ginger and cook until soft. Add tangerine juice and brown sugar and bring to a boil. Add half of the cranberries and cook until they pop. Add remaining cranberries and cook for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and add tangerines and zest. Transfer to a serving bowl and serve at room temperature.

Celery Root & Apple Puree

- 1/4 pound (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 cup large-diced fennel bulb, tops and core removed
- 2 pounds celery root, peeled and (3/4-inch) diced
- 8 ounces Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and (3/4-inch) diced
- 3 Golden Delicious apples, peeled, cored, and (3/4-inch) diced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup good apple cider
- 1/4 cup heavy cream

Melt the butter over medium heat in a shallow pot or large saute pan. Add the fennel, celery root, potatoes, apples, 1 1/2 teaspoons salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. Saute the vegetables, stirring occasionally, until they begin to soften, about 4 to 5 minutes. Add the cider and tightly cover the pot. Simmer over low heat (I pull the pot halfway off the heat) for 30 to 40 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are very soft. If the vegetables begin to burn or they seem dry, add another few tablespoons of apple cider or some water.

When the vegetables are cooked, add the cream and cook for 1 more minute. Transfer the mixture to a (Foley) food mill fitted with the coarsest blade and process. (***You can also use a food processor but I think it comes out too dense...and Ok I have just mashed it all with a wine bottle or mixed it up in my kitchen Aid Mixer.***) Taste for salt and pepper and return to the pot to keep warm. Serve warm.

Granny's Cranberry Pie

The Crust:

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 5 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2 teaspoons granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 cups shortening (or butter, you decide which is your favorite)
- 2/3 cup plus 2 tablespoons ice water

The Filling:

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 4 Anjou or Bosc Pears, peeled, cored, and cut into thin slices
- 1 1/2 cups sugar, divided
- 3 whole cloves
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon light corn syrup
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon fresh orange zest
- 1 bag (24 ounces) fresh cranberries

The Garnish: 1/2 cup granulated (vanilla) sugar from sugar that I had placed a split vanilla bean pod into (ABOUT 2 CUPS OF SUGAR) for a week, Vanilla or nutmeg ice cream (optional)

For the pie crust: Grease a pie tin with the butter. Clear and clean off a large, flat surface. Lightly flour the area. Combine the 5 cups flour, sugar, and salt in a metal bowl. Work the shortening in with your fingers until the mixture is almost smooth. Add the ice water and continue to mix with your fingers. (or add

ingredients to food processor and pulse until just combined then add water and run UNTIL ball forms and comes AWAY from the work bowl STOP)

Place the dough on the floured surface and cut in half. Reserve the second half. Using a rolling pin, roll out the first half so it is at least 4 to 5 inches wider than the pie tin. Gently place the dough into the pie tin and press it into the bottom and the sides of the tin. Pinch any excess at the top. Place the pan in the refrigerator to rest. Roll the second half of the dough for the top of the pie. Place on a baking sheet and refrigerate.

For the filling: Heat the butter in medium sauté pan. Add the pears and sauté until tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Add 1/2 cup sugar and the cloves. Toss and remove from the heat to cool in a bowl.

Combine the remaining 1 cup sugar, lemon juice, 1 corn syrup, cornstarch, and orange zest and mix. Add the cranberries and toss to coat the fruit. In the same sauté pan and add the cranberry mixture. Sauté quickly, 1 to 2 minutes, until the cranberries soften slightly and the ingredients meld together. Combine the pear mixture and cranberry mixture in a bowl and refrigerate, uncovered, so it cools.

To assemble: Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Pour the filling onto the bottom pie crust. Remove the top crust from the refrigerator and fold it onto the rolling pin. Roll the dough over the top of the pie. Pinch the top to make the edges fluted and sealed all around the pie. Use a pastry cutter or small knife to cut an opening in the center of the top. Fold back the dough so it looks like open pages of a book.

Place the pie in the center of the oven. **Bake undisturbed, for 10 minutes.** Lower the heat to 375 degrees F. Cook for an additional 30 minutes. Lower the oven to 325 degrees F and cook for an additional 10 minutes. Remove the pie from the oven to cool. When cooled, sprinkle the granulated sugar over the top of the pie, cut into slices, and serve with ice cream, if desired.

Herb Roasted Turkey Breast

- 1 whole bone-in turkey breast, 6 1/2 to 7 pounds
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic (3 cloves)
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary leaves
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh sage leaves
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons good olive oil
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 cup dry white wine

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Place the turkey breast, skin side up, on a rack in a roasting pan. In a small bowl, combine the garlic, mustard, herbs, salt, pepper, olive oil, and lemon juice to make a paste. Loosen the skin from the meat gently with your fingers and smear half of the paste directly on the meat. Spread the remaining paste evenly on the skin. Pour the wine into the bottom of the roasting pan.

Roast the turkey for 1 3/4 to 2 hours, until the skin is golden brown and an instant-read thermometer registers 165 degrees F when inserted into the thickest and meatiest areas of the breast. (I test in several places.) If the skin is over-browning, cover the breast loosely with aluminum foil.

When the turkey is done, cover with foil and allow it to rest at room temperature for 15 minutes. Slice and serve with the pan juices spooned over the turkey

Another FAVORITE Gravy Recipe

- 1/4 pound (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups chopped yellow onion (2 onions)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Defatted turkey drippings plus chicken stock to make 2 cups, heated
- 1 tablespoon Cognac or brandy
- 1 tablespoon white wine, optional
- 1 tablespoon heavy cream, optional

In a large (10 to 12-inch) sauté pan, cook the butter and onions over medium-low heat for 12 to 15 minutes, until the onions are lightly browned. Don't rush this step; it makes all the difference when the onions are well-cooked. Sprinkle the flour into the pan, whisk in, then add the salt and pepper. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the hot chicken stock mixture and Cognac, and cook uncovered for 4 to 5 minutes until thickened. Add the wine and cream, if desired. Season, to taste, and serve.

Another Stuffing Recipe

- 16 cups 1-inch bread cubes, white or sourdough (1 1/2 pound loaf)
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 2 cups medium-diced yellow onion (2 onions)
- 1 cup medium-diced celery (2 stalks)
- 2 Granny Smith apples, unpeeled, cored and large-diced
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 3/4 pound sweet or spicy Italian sausage, casings removed
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cup dried cranberries

Preheat the oven to 300 degrees F. Place the bread cubes in a single layer on a sheet pan and bake for 7 minutes. Raise the oven temperature to 350 degrees F. Remove the bread cubes to a very large bowl. Meanwhile, in a large sauté pan, melt the butter and add the onions, celery, apples, parsley, salt and pepper.

Sauté over medium heat for 10 minutes, until the vegetables are softened. Add to the bread cubes. In the same sauté pan, cook the sausage over medium heat for about 10 minutes, until browned and cooked through, breaking up the sausage with a fork while cooking. Add to the bread cubes and vegetables. Add the chicken stock and cranberries to the mixture. Mix well, and pour into a 9 by 12-inch baking dish. Bake for 30 minutes, until browned on top and hot in the middle. Serve warm.

Mulled Cider

- 2 quarts apple cider
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 whole allspice berries
- 2 whole cloves
- 1 orange, thinly sliced

Place all ingredients in a large saucepan and bring to a simmer over a burner. Divide among individual mugs and serve hot.