



Babs' Guide to a Stress-Free Thanksgiving

2021

Hi, It's Babs! Over the years, I have developed little systems that work for me for planning holidays. I have put some of my favorites together for you. I hope it helps you get organized, stay organized, and keep your sanity. Enjoy your loved ones and have fun!

xo

Babs



GUEST LIST



GUEST	RSVP	BRINGING	REQUESTS	ADULTS	KIDS
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					

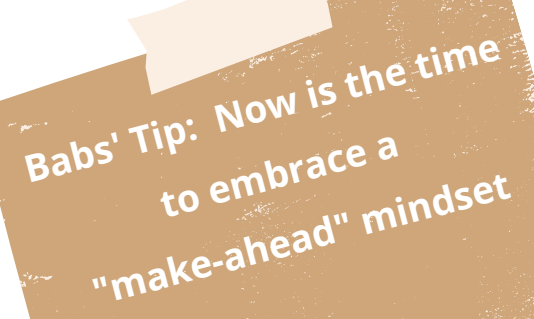
Babs' Tip: If guests ask to help, give them an assignment.

EQUIPMENT



- DISPOSABLE ALUMINUM ROASTING PAN OR GOOD QUALITY ROASTING PAN WITH RACK (IF YOU DON'T HAVE THIS, YOU MAY WANT TO INVEST IN ONE)
- GOOD QUALITY DIGITAL THERMOMETER (WE LIKE THERMAPEN)
- CASSEROLES IN VARYING SIZES
- HALF-SIZE SHEET PANS, HAVE AT LEAST 3
- KITCHEN TWINE
- TRUSSING NEEDLES
- A GOOD PAIR OF KITCHEN SHEARS
- WHISKS IN VARYING SIZES, AND A FLAT WHISK
- POTATO RICER FOR LUMP-FREE MASHED POTATOES
- ELECTRIC KNIFE (WE USE THE SAME ONE I GOT MY SISTER-IN-LAW, ROSEANNE 52 YEARS AGO!)
- LARGE CUTTING BOARD WITH A LIP
- GRAVY BOAT
- LARGE PLATTER FOR TURKEY
- CONTAINERS FOR LEFT-OVERS, AND SOME SMALLER CONTAINERS TO SEND GUESTS HOME WITH DOGGIE BAGS.





Babs' Tip: Now is the time
to embrace a
"make-ahead" mindset

3 WEEKS AHEAD

- Invite guests (note you need a guest count to order the turkey)
- Order turkey if using fresh
- Begin to plan menu


Make and freeze:

- dinner rolls
- pie crusts
- make-ahead gravy

2 WEEKS AHEAD

- Inventory equipment and household goods
- Finalize menu
- Shop non-perishables
- Make cheesecake (cups)

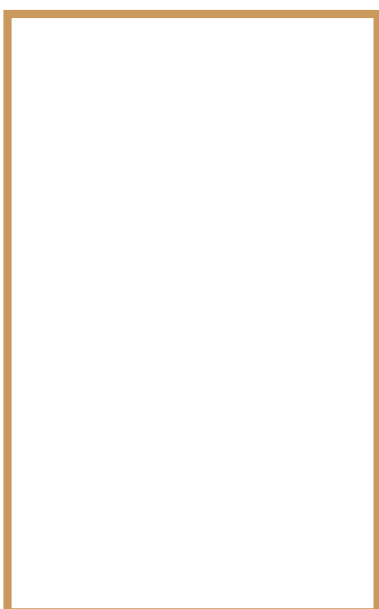
1 WEEK AHEAD

- Clean fridge
 - Buy turkey if using frozen (reminder: for smaller gatherings, a turkey breast is the way to go!)
 - Thaw and brine the turkey (1 day to thaw every 4 lbs plus an extra day to brine if you choose to do so)
 - Set the table
 - Shop perishables and alcohol
 - Make cranberry sauce
 - Shop for cheese board supplies
- 

*Babs' Tip: keep things simple...
if you don't have the time to
make it ahead, you can
always buy dinner rolls or
desserts.*

THANKSGIVING WEEK

MONDAY



TUESDAY

- Prep all side dishes and stuffing (no cooking yet - just prep)
- Peel and prep for mashed potatoes and keep in cold water in fridge

WEDNESDAY

- Assemble all side dishes (don't cook)
- Complete day-of cooking plan
- Make mashed potatoes/sweet potatoes
- Bake pies

THURSDAY

Happy
Thanksgiving!

Have gratitude beans
at each place setting
(more to come on this)

FRIDAY

Enjoy leftovers

SATURDAY

Make gratitude
soup

Day-of Cooking Plan








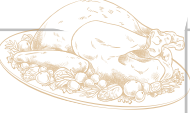

PREP DISHES

OVEN

6 AM		
7 AM		
8 AM		
9 AM		
10 AM		
11 AM		
12 PM		
1 PM		
2 PM		
3 PM		
4 PM		
5 PM		
6 PM		
7 PM		



Babs' Thanksgiving Countdown

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1 INVITE GUESTS & CREATE MENU 	2	3	4 ORDER TURKEY	5 DINNER ROLLS PIE CRUSTS 	6 MAKE-AHEAD GRAVY	7
8 	9 EQUIPMENT AND HOUSEHOLD GOODS INVENTORY	10 FINALIZE MENU	11 	12 SHOP FOR NON-PERISHABLES	13 CHEESECAKE CUPS	14
15 CLEAN FRIDGE	16 	17 MAKE AHEAD CHEESE BREAD AND FREEZE BUY TURKEY IF USING FROZEN	18 SHOP FOR PERISHABLES AND ALCOHOL	19	20	21  SET TABLE
22 	23 PREP ALL SIDE DISHES	24 PREP STUFFING (NO EGGS YET) MAKE PIES DAY-OF COOKING PLAN	25 BAKE SIDES WARM MASHED POTATOES IN SLOW COOKER 	26 TURKEY LEFTOVERS	27 GRATITUDE SOUP 	28
29	30					



* Make Ahead Turkey Gravy



Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 3 hours

Yield: 8 cups

INGREDIENTS

- 5-7 lbs of turkey wings or thighs
- 2 medium carrots, cut in 3 inch pieces
- 2 medium celery stalks, cut in 3 inch pieces
- 2 medium onions, quartered
- 1 head garlic, cut in half
- 1 tsp salt and ½ tsp pepper
- 10 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 3 bunches fresh thyme
- Unsalted butter
- ¾ cup flour

INSTRUCTIONS

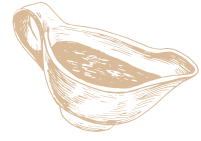
01

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. In a well greased large roasting pan, add the turkey parts, carrots, celery, onions, and garlic. Toss everything with ½ cup olive oil, seasoning with salt and pepper. Roast until the turkey wings/thighs turn a deep golden brown, about 1 to 1½ hours, turning occasionally. Transfer the cooked wings and vegetables to a large pot.

02

Place the roasting pan on the stove over two burners set on medium-high heat. Pour in the white wine. Bring to a boil and vigorously scrape any brown bits or vegetables stuck to the bottom of the pan. Turn heat down and simmer for 5 minutes. Pour the wine mixture into the dutch oven with the turkey parts. Add the chicken broth and the fresh thyme to the pot. Push the turkey parts down into the broth. Bring mixture to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat so the stock maintains a gentle simmer. Simmer for 2 hours.

Make Ahead Gravy



03 With tongs, remove the turkey parts, discarding the skin and bones. The meat can be used in soup for later use.

Pour the broth mixture through a strainer set over a large container, making sure to press down on the vegetables with a spoon to get all the liquid out; then discard the vegetables. At this point, the stock can be refrigerated for a few hours or overnight. The fat will solidify and can be removed easily. When ready, reheat the stock after removing the fat.

04 Measure the reserved fat and add additional unsalted butter, if needed, to make $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of fat. Transfer this to a large pot and set the pan over medium heat. Slowly whisk in flour and make a roux, cooking until the flour mixture looks golden brown and smooth, about 5-7 minutes, whisking constantly. Very gradually whisk in the hot broth a little at a time, whisking constantly until gravy comes to a boil and thickens. Simmer, whisking, until thickened to your liking. If too thick, just add more stock. If it's lumpy, pass it through a strainer or pop it in a blender. This should yield about 8 cups of gravy. Adjust for seasoning.

It's also a good idea to freeze any leftover stock which may be used to thin out the gravy, if needed, before serving. Let the gravy cool and then transfer to a container. Refrigerate or freeze.

STORAGE

The gravy will keep for 5 days refrigerated and 4 months if frozen. This makes plenty of gravy, so you'll have enough for hot turkey sandwiches and leftovers.

Fluffy make-ahead rolls

INGREDIENTS

- 3 Tbl unsalted butter
- 1 ½ cups whole milk
- ⅓ cup honey
- 4 Tbl vegetable shortening
- 5 - 5 ½ cups (25-27½ ounces) all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbl instant or rapid-rise yeast
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 large egg, plus 1 large egg beaten with 1 tablespoon water

INSTRUCTIONS

01

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 200 degrees. When the oven reaches 200 degrees, shut the oven off. Grease a large bowl with 1cooking spray. Line 13 by a 9-inch baking dish with foil, leaving an overhang on all sides. Grease foil with cooking spray.

02

Place milk, honey, shortening, and 3 tablespoons butter in a large measuring cup. Microwave on high power until milk is warm (110 degrees) and butter and shortening begin to melt, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir well.

03

Mix 4 1/2 cups flour, yeast, and salt in the bowl of a standing mixer fitted with a dough hook. Turn the mixer to low and slowly add milk mixture. After dough comes together, increase speed to medium, add 1 egg, and mix until dough is smooth, about 2 minutes. Add another 1/2 cup flour and knead until dough is shiny and smooth and comes away from sides of mixing bowl, 6 to 7 minutes (add up to 1/2 cup more flour if the dough is too sticky). Turn dough onto an unfloured surface and knead briefly to form a smooth, cohesive ball. Transfer dough to a greased bowl and turn to coat. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and place in turned-off oven until dough has doubled in size, 50 to 60 minutes.

Fluffy make-ahead rolls



04

Punch down dough on a floured surface and divide into 3 equal pieces (be sure to use your kitchen scale if you have one.) Roll each piece into a thick cylinder and cut each cylinder into 5 equal pieces (use that scale;)

05

Working one piece at a time (keep remaining pieces covered with plastic wrap), form dough pieces into smooth, taut rounds and arrange in a prepared baking dish. Lightly press on dough rounds so they just touch each other. Cover baking dish with plastic wrap and return to turned-off oven until dough rounds have doubled in size, 50 to 60 minutes.

06

Remove rolls from oven and preheat oven to 375 degrees. Unwrap baking dish and brush rolls with egg-water mixture. Bake until rolls are a deep golden brown, 25 to 27 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool in the baking dish on wire rack for 5 minutes. Using foil handles, remove rolls from the baking dish, but keep them on the foil, and cool on a wire rack for 2 hours.

STORAGE

Keeping the rolls together, wrap tightly in plastic wrap, then in foil, and freeze for up to 1 month. To serve: Remove from foil and plastic wrap, then replace rolls into foil and defrost at room temperature for 2 hours. Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 degrees. Bake foil-wrapped rolls on baking sheet until heated through, about 30 minutes. Serve.