

Thanksgiving Holiday Menu-Mailer Menu and Shopping List

Thanksgiving Sampler

Saving the Holidays Menus

The Menu—Serves 12:

Simple Roast Turkey & Pan Gravy
Muzzie's Fabulous Stuffing
Orange Cranberry Sauce
Old Fashioned Mashed Potatoes
Oven Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Onions
Sautéed Green Beans with Nutmeg
Rolls and Butter
Pumpkin Cheesecake

The Shopping List:

MEAT:

1 15- to 16- pound turkey, fresh or frozen (your choice)
1 pound bulk breakfast sausage (I use Farmer John links with no casings)

CONDIMENTS:

Extra virgin Olive oil

PRODUCE:

3 pounds onions
4 medium red onions
1 head garlic
1 bunch carrots
1 bunch celery
1 green apple (smallish)
1 bunch parsley
5 pounds russet potatoes (12 medium potatoes)
Fresh green beans (12 good handfuls, LOL)
8 medium sweet potatoes (they are reddish and in the West they call them yams, but they are wrong! LOL)
1 pound bag fresh cranberries

SPICES:

Thyme
Poultry seasoning
White pepper
Sage
Nutmeg
Lemon pepper
Ground cinnamon
Ground ginger
Pure vanilla extract

CANNED GOODS:

1 or 2 (14.75 oz.) cans chicken broth (or more for back up)
1 (16 oz.) can pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie filling)

BAKERY:

Rolls for 12 (at my house, that would be 3 dozen!)

DRIED GOODS:

Wondra flour or Pillsbury's fine flour (they're in canisters and shake out)
Sugar (have at least 2 pounds on hand for baking, Cranberries, coffee, etc.)
Coffee for dessert (perhaps decaf?)
1 box Mrs. Cubbison's BREAD Stuff Mix (or use Pepperidge Farm on the East Coast -- NOT the cornbread kind)
1 envelope of turkey gravy mix (Don't freak out!)
1 box ginger snaps

DAIRY:

2 pounds unsalted butter (freeze any remaining)
Heavy cream (you need 3/4 cup)
Half and half for coffee
Milk (for making potatoes—about 1 cup)
Orange juice (1 cup)
3 (8 oz.) packages of Philadelphia cream cheese (best brand)
Eggs (4)

FROZEN:

Rolls for 12 (good alternative if you don't do bakery rolls)

Turkey Day Tools

Check your tools. Do you have what you need? This is all essential equipment. You needn't go out and buy everything—this stuff is all easily borrow-able, just ask!

Turkey baster (if you still want to baste after my basting diatribe)

Meat thermometer (remember, MEAT, not candy thermometer)

Cutting board (there is place on these boards for the juices to go)

Carving knife set

Large roasting pan (flimsy aluminum ones are a hazard and don't cook the turkey nearly as well as a real roaster—invest in one or borrow one)

Rack for the bottom of the roasting pan

Roll of heavy duty aluminum foil

Kitchen scissors

Kitchen twine or one of those turkey kits with the skewers and thread (I don't use any of them, but some people like them)

Wire Whisk

Potato masher

Electric beaters or mixer

9" Spring Form Pan (for cheesecake)

Gravy boat (for passing the gravy)

THANKSGIVING TIMELINE

Remember: this is a holiday for EVERYONE, including the cook.

Two Weeks to Ten Days Ahead:

Order your turkey if you're doing a fresh one. How much turkey will you need? About 1 pound per adult and a half pound per child so if you are having 10 adults and 10 children, you will need at least a 15 pound turkey. That will give you what you need, but no leftovers. My philosophy is buy a big one and enjoy the leftovers!

Firm up your guest list. Call and confirm as necessary.

Although the shopping list is done for you, go through it, double check what you already have and head for the market. Yes, buy EVERYTHING now, except the fresh green beans, celery and parsley (and obviously, the fresh turkey if you ordered one). The only other exception would be the dinner rolls if you're getting them from a bakery fresh. When you buy the cranberries, put them right into the freezer, in the bag they came in or wait and buy them when you get the green beans, etc. Your choice, but I buy them now because I've had a problem getting them (they've been out) when it's closer to T-day. Same goes with heavy cream for whipping cream.

When you go shopping, make it easy on yourself. If at all possible, go shopping during off hours, without children and not hungry, or having to go the potty! I am serious...you have work to do there, girl!

Plan the table—are you using linens? Do they need pressing? Press them now and hang them or fold them for later. Nothing is worse than starching a tablecloth just before your guests are due to arrive (ask me how I know this!).

Double check your serving pieces and serving utensils against your menu. Do you have all the serving pieces you need, etc.? Make arrangements now to get or borrow what you need. DON'T do it the day of! If your great aunt forgets to bring her gravy boat and ladle, you're up a creek without a paddle (or a ladle in this case).

One Week Ahead:

If you have shopped already (and you should have if you're using my plan), make a quick double check of your list and menu to make sure everything is ready for you to use. Take a hint from Santa and make your list and check it twice. This is not the time to forget anything! If you're using my recipes and grocery list, the whole thing is already done for you so you can skip this step and go have a cup of tea instead (isn't this fun?).

Clean out your refrigerator. Be ruthless. You're going to need the room! You may also want to haul out the big cooler from the garage and clean it out to use on T-Day, if you're desperate for space. Ask one of your guests to bring ice—you won't have room in your poor beleaguered fridge.

Three Days Ahead:

Pull all the pieces you are going to use for serving. It is helpful to decide what is going to go in what and write it on a 3 x 5 card and toss the card into the serving piece itself. A friend and mentor, Carolyn Dunn, from my early-married days taught me this nifty trick and it's saved my biscuits more than once. Then, you can stack your bowls, platters and other serving pieces together in one area with the cards already in them. Inevitably, on the big day, you will have all kinds of volunteers in the kitchen just before the time you're ready to serve. Having those cards in place at that time will truly save your sanity while you're trying to finish up the gravy and get the bird carved and you can keep the discussion about what goes in where to a minimum because the guesswork is gone.

To keep your serving pieces dust free, cover with a clean sheet folded in half. Marla Cilley, the FlyLady, even sets her table all the way a few days ahead and puts a clean sheet right over the top. When I had a dining room, I did the same thing, but now I only have the one table and I need to use it everyday. So use whichever method works for you—still get your serving pieces ready.

Purchase any last minute/fresh items like the ones mentioned above.

Don't forget-- thaw your frozen bird starting today! See Turkey 101 (page 22 of Saving Dinner for the Holidays) for more info on thawing a turkey.

Two Days Before:

Make the Pumpkin Cheesecake. When it has completely cooled, cover in plastic wrap and place in the fridge.

Make the Orange Cranberry Sauce. Completely cool before refrigerating, then cover the sauce with plastic wrap setting the wrap itself directly onto the sauce. This will keep the sauce from developing a skin.

The Day Before:

If you ordered a fresh turkey, today's the day to pick it up.

Chop everything and individually bag it up in zipper-topped, plastic bags: onions and celery for the dressing, veggies for side dishes, etc. Refrigerate after prepping. Don't do the potatoes or sweet potatoes though: they'll discolor.

Set the table and cover it with a sheet to keep the dust out.

Go over your plan for T Day and make sure your ducks (turkeys?) are in a row. Double check everything—your serving pieces, your menu, your guest list—the whole shabang. Determine the time your turkey should go in

the oven based on when you want dinner served (don't forget to include your turkey's "rest time"!). Use the T Day Countdown list below will help you execute the big day. Having that list handy will clear your brain so you can be pleasant with your guests!
Go to bed early! Tomorrow's a big day.

T Day Countdown:

In the morning:

Prepare Muzzie's Fabulous Stuffing (in the Thanksgiving Menu-Mailer).

Put your bird in the oven at the appropriate time based on the Chart for Cooking Your Bird and what time you want to serve dinner. Remember, you need to add an hour to that time because the bird needs to rest an hour out of the oven before serving. Should you get out of control at any point, call the Butterball turkey hotline, 1-800-BUTTERBALL.

Make the stock for the gravy (included in the Pan Gravy recipe).

Wash, peel and chunk potatoes for mashed potatoes for Old Fashioned Mashed Potatoes. Place in a pot with cold water. Set aside, not on the stove or the pot will become warm and the potatoes will begin to cook—they need to stay cool.

Prepare Oven Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Onions to go in the oven; set aside.

Put the butter, salt and pepper (if not already there) on the table. Consider two butters and two sets of salt and peppers on either end.

Remember, clean as you go—it's so much EASIER! Keep a sink full of hot soapy water and dump stuff in there as you go. Run the dishwasher and empty it after this little blitz.

Take a timeout and put your feet up for a bit. On your way to your favorite chair, double check the bathrooms for clean guest towels, hand soap and extra toilet paper before you sit down.

One Hour Before:

At this point, your turkey should be finished roasting and resting comfortably. Don't forget to give him his foil jacket so he doesn't get cold. You still have a lot to do, if someone volunteers to help, let them help!

Cook Muzzie's Fabulous Stuffing (the pan that didn't go in the bird if you stuffed).

Cook the Old Fashioned Mashed potatoes (see recipe) and place in a crock-pot on low (I strongly urge you to test drive this first to make sure your crock-pot will not run too hot for this task).

Cook Oven Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Onions (see recipe). If you have only one oven, you have a temperature conflict with the stuffing. Here's how to handle that. Cook this recipe as is and place Muzzie's Fabulous Stuffing (covered with foil) in the oven after your Oven Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Onions have been cooking. At this point, there is only 20 minutes left and the stuffing can take the heat as long as it is covered and sealed. When you pull the sweet potatoes, immediately lower the oven temp. to 350 and finished heating the stuffing (probably less time than the recipe calls for because of the initial blast of higher heat). Be flexible—stuffing is easy as long as you keep it covered so it won't dry out. Keep everything warm after cooking.

Cook Sautéed Green Beans with Nutmeg (see recipe). Keep warm after cooking.

Carve the turkey.

Make the Pan Gravy (see recipe).

Heat the rolls.

Put the cranberries in the serving dish with a utensil and on the table or buffet.

Whip the cream (or do it later...that's what I do)

Set the coffeemaker up so all you have to do is flick the switch.

Time to Eat!

Start getting everything in its serving dish: turkey on the platter with serving utensil, rolls in the basket (or baskets) with the napkin to keep them warm, green beans, sweet potatoes, gravy in its boat, stuffing or dressing, and of course, the mashed potatoes.

You've earned your kudos! Take the compliments, enjoy your family and friends, and most importantly, give thanks.

Simple Roast Turkey

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12 with leftovers!)

1 15-pound turkey (at least, I will probably go bigger for more leftovers)	(un-stuffing option: one carrot, one stalk of celery, a large onion, a green apple, some thyme)
One stick of unsalted butter, softened	thyme)
Salt and pepper to taste	Thyme
1 recipe Muzzie's Fabulous Stuffing (see recipe)	Sage
	Water

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: You will usually find a package of giblets (innards) in the neck cavity of the turkey. Remove those, place in the fridge and I will tell you what to do with them later. Right now, it's bath time for old tom. Rinse the cavities (the neck and bottom) and outside of the bird with cool water then pat dry with paper towels. Sprinkle the cavity of the turkey lightly with salt if desired. If you are not stuffing the bird, throw a washed carrot cut in half, a large onion cut in half and a celery stick cut in half into the cavity, sprinkle a little thyme and some salt and pepper. You can also add a half a green seeded apple, quartered if you like. I would also throw a little sage and thyme in there and mix everything up with my hand (about 1/2 a teaspoon each). This will just help to flavor the drippings, which in turn will help you make scrumptious gravy. Do not salt the cavity if you will be stuffing the turkey.

If you will be stuffing the bird, don't do it now. Wait to do that till just before he hits the oven. Remove a rack from the oven, and position the last rack to be the second to the bottom ledge (in other words, not the very bottom). Turn on the oven to preheat, 500 degrees.

Place the turkey, breast side up, on a rack in a shallow roasting pan (the rack will help the whole turkey brown). Rub your bird down (using your hands) with a cube of softened, unsalted butter (this isn't one of those calorie conscientious meals). You will want to get under the skin and over the skin too (unless putting your hand under the turkey's skin creeps you out). Put 1/2 cup of water on the bottom of the pan. If you are using a meat thermometer (which is advised), place the thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh muscle, but do not allow it to touch the bone or you will get a false reading.

Now, stuff the bird if you are going to stuff it. I have recently become a dressing convert after years of stuffing my bird. I used to stuff and I love the stuffing, but I have found that stuffing the turkey is one of the reasons the turkey dries out, so my stuffing has become dressing now. A part of me mourns the loss of that delectable stuffing that came out of my turkey, but the other part of me is thrilled with the moist results of my turkey.

Place the turkey in a preheated 500-degree oven for a half hour. Set your timer! The reason for the intense beginning heat is that this will allow the fat under the skin on the bottom of turkey (remember—you've got her sitting on a rack in the roasting pan) to melt and help brown the skin on the bottom. No more mush bottomed turkeys! Also, the turkey will begin to turn bronzy brown, which you want. After the initial 500-degree zapping, turn your oven down to a respectable 325 degrees. Do you feel better now?

Follow the timetable on the turkey packaging for approximate roasting time. Place a tent of foil loosely over the turkey when it begins to turn golden brown, exposing only the drumsticks to the oven. Roast the turkey until the meat thermometer reads 180 degrees (for a whole turkey) and the juice is no longer pink when you cut into the center of the thigh (it should be clear). The drumstick should move easily in the socket when lifted or twisted. When the turkey is finished roasting, remove it from the oven and let it stand at least 1/2 hour for easiest carving. However, it's even better to let it rest an hour. That way you can count down the rest of the meal. Keep the turkey tented with foil so it will stay warm.

Pan Gravy

Let's face it: lumpy gravy just screams amateur. It doesn't take gourmet chef cooking skills to make a lumpless gravy, nor is it rocket science. But for all the mixing, whisking and fussing, good gravy is a mystery. To do it yourself, you just need a few well-kept secrets given to you. So here you have it, once and for all: gravy demystified. Here are the ingredients you will need to make gorgeous gravy:

INGREDIENTS:

Turkey broth (recipe of sorts, included. Keep reading)	Salt and pepper to taste
Wondra flour (yes, buy this)	½ carrot
White pepper	1 stalk celery
	½ large onion, quartered
	Water

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: Remember I promised you I would tell you what to do with the giblet pouch? Now is the time. In that drippy bag, you are going to find a big old turkey neck, the heart, gizzard and liver. The heart, gizzard and liver are great treats for the dog, but unless giblet gravy is your heart's desire (sorry, couldn't help myself), in my opinion, they have no place in a gravy boat.

First off, get your turkey neck, a half a carrot, celery stalk and a half an onion, quartered. Throw them all together into a medium sized saucepan and fill about three quarters of the way up with cold water. Put the pan on a medium-high heat, bring to a boil, then lower the temp and allow to simmer for about an hour or so. Throw a lid on the top and turn it down even lower and allow it to cook for another hour. Strain broth from solids (toss the solids) and set aside for later gravy making. If it is hours away from that event, refrigerate the broth.

Hitting the Gravy Train

Okay, the turkey has been removed from the pan and is resting comfortably. Skim the big greasy globs of fat from the roasting pan and place in a medium sized saucepan (there should be about three tablespoons or so of fat, depending on the size of your bird). Next, take an equal amount of Wondra flour and add to that turkey grease (I know this sounds yucky, but you have to trust me). The heat should be about medium-high and you need to whisk away to your heart's content until the roux (pronounced ROO) is golden and thick, and naturally lumpless. This roux procedure will take you all of five minutes—very easy, you can't mess this up. Set your beautiful roux aside.

Now back to the roasting pan. Add a cup of your reserved turkey neck stock to the roasting pan and turn up the heat (you will probably need two burners for the job) and bring it to a boil. Using your wire whisk, scrape up all the browned bits off the bottom of the pan. Those browned bits contain concentrated turkey flavor that will make your turkey gravy absolutely to die for. Don't skip this step. Now add all the golden roux in the saucepan you just made, into your roaster and whisk like your life depended on it. In just moments, a beautiful, velvety bronzed gravy should be emerging and filling you with the joy of accomplishment. Salt and pepper to taste, and add a pinch of white pepper.

I am an admitted snob when it comes to gravy making, but even cookbook authors have their limitations when it comes to making enough turkey gravy. Truth be told, a turkey doesn't make as much gravy as necessary for the gravy hounds undoubtedly sitting at your very holiday table. You know the types—they use three ladles of gravy on their potatoes alone before even tackling the turkey on their plates. It is because of them that I came up with this trick. Actually, I take that back. My sister did this and I was shocked at how good it was. I didn't know she had done this at the time or I probably would have thrown myself prostrate on the stove begging her not to ruin the gravy. Here's what she did: she added a package of dry turkey gravy mix (and the accompanying water) to her already made gravy. No one was the wiser—including me! I was amazed at how much gravy she had and too, was thrilled that I (an admitted gravy snob, plus a hound myself) was able to amply ladle gravy without being scolded about "saving some for the next guy". She told me about the sneaky gravy extension trick after I had polished off Round One of The Meal and noticed there was still gravy left. I nearly needed smelling salts when she told me what she had done. I tried this trick at home and it is simply fabulous. This kind of mix stuff I will do on special occasions, but I will never admit to it, so don't tell a soul you heard this from me.

Muzzie's Fabulous Stuffing

Muzzie is my mom, affectionately nicknamed this silly name (it means "confused" in the dictionary—I promise, I only found that out because I like crossword puzzles) by yours truly when I was a smart-mouthed kid. It stuck and now the whole world calls her Muzzie (although some just call her plain Muzz). Muzzie is a great cook and for many years I tried different gourmet recipes for stuffing, all homemade, none with a mix, but none ever came out better than my Mom's. Could be for sentimental reasons, but she definitely has a fan club at my house when it comes to stuffing!

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12 with leftovers)	1 ½ tablespoons butter, plus a splash of vegetable oil to keep the butter from burning
1 pound bulk breakfast sausage	
1 box (2 envelopes) of Mrs. Cubbison's Stuffing mix (on the East Coast, use Pepperidge Farm--NOT the cornbread kind, the regular bread kind)	1 good handful of parsley, finely chopped
2 stalks of celery, chopped	1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
1 large onion chopped	1 (14.75 oz.) can chicken broth (as needed - you won't need the whole thing)
	Water

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: First off, cook the sausage in a skillet with about an inch of water, over a medium-high heat. You won't be frying it—you'll be poaching it. Use a potato masher to mash the sausage into smallish pieces. You want it thoroughly cooked and not browned and greasy, and not into tiny bits either. Keep half the remaining water. Throw the cooked sausage and sausage water you kept in a bowl and set aside—we need to use the skillet again.

Now in that same skillet, heat the butter and oil together over medium-high heat. Add the onion and celery together and cook till nice and soft, about 8 minutes.

Into a large mixing bowl, add the sausage, sautéed veggies and remaining ingredients **except** the chicken broth. Toss everything together and add a little chicken broth, a bit at a time, to get a soft texture. You will use about a quarter of a cup of chicken broth or maybe a little more, depending on how dry your dressing is. You want it moist, not drenched. Definitely don't soak the stuffing/dressing with chicken broth. Save any remaining broth for the gravy.

Place dressing in a lightly greased casserole dish to be baked later (in a 325 degree oven, covered for about 1 hour; see time line for timing. You will bake the dressing an hour before show time.

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THIS MENU MAY NOT BE FORWARDED TO ANYONE. YOU WILL BE UNSUBSCRIBED.

Orange Cranberry Sauce

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12 with leftovers)	1 cup water
4 cups fresh or frozen cranberries (1 pound bag)	1 ½ cups sugar
	1 cup orange juice

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: Rinse the cranberries (even if they are frozen) in a strainer with cool water, and remove any stems and bad or blemished berries.

In a large saucepan, over medium heat, heat the water, juice and sugar to boiling stirring occasionally. Continue boiling 5 minutes longer to assure sugar is completely melted, stirring occasionally.

Add the cranberries. Heat back to boiling over medium heat; stirring occasionally. Put a lid on the saucepan and continue boiling about 5 minutes longer, still stirring occasionally, until you hear the cranberries begin to pop. Remove the saucepan from the heat, give it a good stir and allow to cool for about 20 minutes. Pour the cranberry sauce into a bowl or container and allow to completely cool before refrigerating.

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Good Old Fashioned Mashed Potatoes

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12)
12 good sized Russet potatoes, peeled and quartered

Unsalted butter
Milk
Salt and pepper to taste

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: Fill a large pot with water and as you prepare the potatoes, throw them in after quartering them. After you are finished, drain the water if it looks dirty or murky and fill it up with fresh water. You need to adequately cover the potatoes, but there should be at least a couple of inches of cooking room.

Place the pot of potatoes on a burner, turn up to high and get the potatoes boiling. You can put on a lid on it (it will boil faster) but stay in the room so it doesn't boil over. When it starts to boil, bring the heat down to a simmer and cook until fork tender (about 20 minutes or so, depending on how big your potato quarters are).

Now carefully drain that heavy pot. See if you can draft a big burly guy to do it for you. If not, please be careful!

To your steaming pot of potatoes, add butter. How much, well I don't want to be quoted on how much I use on Thanksgiving (hey, it's a special occasion!), let your conscience be your guide.

Next, salt and pepper to taste and add about 1/2 cup of milk. That's a starting place. Now pull out your potato masher and put some elbow grease in it or get the big burly guy to do it. DON'T use the electric mixer on these gems! Potatoes have starch in them and when you over handle them (as in whip the daylights out of them with an electric mixer), the starch develops making your lovely mashed potatoes look more like wallpaper paste that needs thinning. Don't go there! Use an old-fashioned potato masher or potato ricer (same kind of deal, only there are little holes in the bottom instead of the usual zigzag pattern of the normal potato masher).

FlyLady does her potatoes earlier in the day and puts them in a crock-pot on low with a little butter on top to keep them from drying out (and the lid on too, of course). I think that is ingenious. However, one word of caution is that with so many variables with crock-pots, you need to make sure yours will work for this task and the "low" setting isn't too high. My old one works for this job, my new one is too hot. See what I mean? Test run a small batch first if you are able.

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Oven Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Onions

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12)
8 medium peeled sweet potatoes, cut into 2-inch pieces
4 medium red onions, cut into 1-inch pieces

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 teaspoons lemon pepper
1 teaspoon salt

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Combine all ingredients in a 13 x 9 inch baking dish. Toss to coat and bake for 35 minutes or so, until the taters are fork tender and nicely browned.

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Rolls and Butter

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12)
Store bought rolls
Butter

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: BUY the rolls! Buy the rolls from a good bakery or the frozen dough kind are good. Make sure they're of a good quality. And BUTTER, not margarine. I use unsalted, but get whichever butter you prefer.

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Sautéed Green Beans with Nutmeg

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12)

12 handfuls of green beans
2 tablespoons of butter (I use unsalted)
1 splash of olive oil

Generous dash of nutmeg (or you can grate it fresh—I have a grater and it's awesome!)
Salt and pepper to taste

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: When you go to the grocery store, count out by the handful, how many beans you will need. Give each adult one handful, and count one handful per two small children. Yes, use your hands, grab a handful of beans, plop it into a plastic bag and consider it a serving.

I know...that doesn't give you pounds. Well, it's the best way I know to give you a good idea of what to buy. Who cares if there isn't a weight? (it's probably close to 2 and a half pounds anyway, if you're cooking for 12). Here's what you do with those beans:

Wash beans and string them (pull the string starting at the stem and pull to the bottom). Then snap them in half (or cut them or leave them whole if they're thin and small). Steam them in a veggie steamer or boil them in a skillet half full of water. When they turn bright green, they're finished. (They will still be a little undercooked). Strain them and set aside.

In a skillet, heat the butter and oil over a medium-high heat and add the well-drained beans. Add the salt and pepper to taste and sauté them for about 2 to 3 minutes. Add a touch of nutmeg and sauté another minute or so. Beans should be tender, but not mushy.

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Pumpkin Cheesecake

INGREDIENTS: (Serves 12)

1 1/4 cups gingersnap cookie crumbs (crush about 20 cookies in a plastic bag with a rolling pin)
1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted
3 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
1 cup sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 (16 ounce) can pumpkin puree (NOT pumpkin pie filling)
4 eggs
3/4 cup chilled whipping cream (need to whip it with 2 teaspoons sugar and a teaspoon of vanilla)

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, mix the cookie crumbs and butter. Press evenly on the bottom of a 9" spring form pan inches. Bake 10 minutes, then let cool. Reduce oven temp. to 300 degrees. In another large bowl, beat the cream cheese, sugar, the cinnamon and ginger on medium speed until smooth. Add pumpkin puree. Now add in the eggs, one at a time on low speed. Pour into the cookie crumb pie shell. Bake your cheesecake until center is firm, about 1 1/4 hours. Cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours. (But in your case, you did it two days prior at least). To loosen cheesecake from the sides of the pan, unbuckle the side and carefully remove. Serve a dollop of whip cream on the cheesecake. This recipe is to die for!

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