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# Thanksgiving With a Twist: 5 Ways to Spruce Up Your Feast Without Overspending

Frugal Foodie on 11/17/2010 | 1 comment | print | random | Like 19



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There's something about the tradition of a Thanksgiving dinner that makes even the most adventurous foodies get conservative.

In most years, the Foodie household is no exception: roasted turkey, gravy, mushroom-laced stuffing, mashed potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cranberry-orange relish and sweet potato casserole. We make the same recipes each year, many of them the same ones that Frugal Foodie's mom uses.

But with so much food on the table, Thanksgiving is a prime opportunity to do a little experimenting, especially if you have enough mashed potatoes to try something different with half of the batch. Frugal Foodie plans on baking a second type of stuffing and morphing the sprouts into a slaw (for both recipes, see below).

What Thanksgiving experiments have worked out for you? Leave a note – and recipes – in the comments below.

### The Twist: Gluten-Free

\* Baker Karen Morgan, the author of "Blackbird Bakery Gluten Free," makes a [cornbread](#), [veggie](#) and [Vieux Marc-infused stuffing](#) that's a good bet even if you can handle gluten.

\* This [gluten-free green bean casserole](#) from CrunchMaster uses fresh

mushrooms, onions, mustard, chicken broth and cheese (among other ingredients) in lieu of the usual fried onions and cream of mushroom soup.

### The Twist: Chicken

Cooking a 16-pound turkey (and dealing with the leftovers) can be overwhelming for folks who aren't expecting a large crowd, says Tiffany Layco, the chef at the Library Bistro in Seattle. To make her chicken, reheat oven to 350 degrees. Rinse and pat dry a 4-6 pound chicken, and squeeze the juices from half a lemon and half a lime into its cavity. Place the halves inside, along with half a bulb of garlic, a bunch of thyme and a few sprigs of rosemary. Cut two tablespoons unsalted butter into small pats and then coat in a mixture of a tablespoon each of chopped rosemary and thyme, two tablespoons flat-leaf parsley and a teaspoon chopped sage. Place herbed butter evenly underneath the skin of the chicken.

Lightly salt and pepper the front surface of the bird. Trussing the chicken with kitchen twine, and then lightly salt and pepper the back as well. Place chicken on roasting pan. Baste chicken with a mixture of the remaining herb mix, a quarter cup olive oil and a half-teaspoon each of salt and pepper. Place in the oven to roast for an hour, re-basting and rotating the bird every half hour. Turn the oven up to 425 degrees and do one final basting. Let cook for 15 minutes and remove.

### The Twist: Not-Just-Cranberry Sauces

\* Ocean Spray offers a [version](#) that relies on dried cranberries, fresh apples and plenty of spices.

\* Frugal Foodie makes a spicy cranberry sauce with cinnamon, pomegranate seeds and orange juice. Combine about a pound of fresh cranberries with one cup sugar, one cup orange juice (or substitute one cup pomegranate juice) and two cinnamon sticks in a medium saucepan. Cook over moderate heat for 10 minutes, until most of the cranberries have burst. Remove cinnamon sticks, spoon sauce into a bowl and let cool. Mix in the seeds of one pomegranate (or less, to taste).

### The Twist: Slightly Different Side Dishes

\* Instead of serving plain steamed or sautéed Brussels sprouts, try this slaw from Bill Fausey, the chef at One Atlantic in Atlantic City, N.J.: In a large skillet, cook ¾ pound thick-sliced bacon over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until crisp, about 6 minutes. Drain on paper towels; reserve 1/4 cup of fat. Cook two pounds thinly sliced Brussels sprouts in a large pan cook over high heat, stirring, until softened but still bright green, about 8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add two peeled, cored and coarsely shredded Granny Smith apples, squeezed to remove juice, and a teaspoon fresh thyme. Cook, stirring, until the apples are warmed through. Transfer the slaw to a platter, scatter the bacon on top and serve.

\* RecipeLion.com uses pureed sweet peas and yogurt for a [different take on mashed potatoes](#).

\* Blue cheese and rosemary essence add a burst of flavor in this mashed potato recipe from Eric Gruber, the executive chef for Shore Lodge and Whitetail Club in McCall, Idaho. "I love the taste of rosemary combined with blue cheese, but I hate the texture of rosemary," he says. "So I ended up steeping the rosemary to get the essence without the texture." In a large stockpot, place six whole, peeled Idaho Russet potatoes and cold water. Place fresh rosemary in cheesecloth and add to stockpot. Bring to a boil and cook until potatoes are tender. Drain water and discard rosemary. Run potatoes through a food mill, then place in a large bowl and add two cups crème fraiche (substitute sour cream if not available) and 1/8 cup blue cheese. Mix by hand with wire whisk. Add salt and pepper to taste.

### The Twist: A Second Stuffing

Frugal Foodie always likes baking extra stuffing in a casserole dish — it's crunchier than the stuff in the bird, and a great way to experiment with new recipes. These two made the short-list for this year:

\* Soft pretzels take the place of bread in [San Diego Pretzel's recipe](#).

\* Macadamia nuts and cranberries offer a unique combination in [this recipe](#) from King's Hawaiian.

Frugal Foodie is a journalist based in New York City who spends her days writing about [personal finance](#) and obsessing about what she'll have for dinner. Chat with her on Twitter through [@MintFoodie](#).

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