

Let's Talk Turkey About Health

Gobbel-icious Thanksgiving fare needn't be calorie dense or unsafe. If you want to optimize your family's health this Thanksgiving, consider choosing a turkey that isn't injected with a salt based solution or with globs of extra butter. Natural turkeys contain no added salt, fat or other ingredients. Bake your turkey covered to hold in the juices and baste with these natural ingredients.

USDA has a tremendous [site](#) that will guide you through proper preparation of your turkey. In general, plan one pound of turkey per guest. Add extra if you enjoy turkey leftovers. Who doesn't? In the event that your turkey has not totally thawed, don't panic. You can still cook it in the oven but it must cook longer and you should follow these [precautions from Mayo Clinic](#).



Most turkey dinners include stuffing, mashed potatoes and other yummy side dishes. Add a fresh raw vegetable relish tray and assorted nuts for pre-dinner munching. Compliment the meal with a nice steamed green vegetable like asparagus, broccoli, green beans, spinach, or Brussels sprouts and you will have a feast that is as beautiful as it is tasty! Try making your own stuffing this year using whole-grain bread or home-made cornbread. When you make it yourself you know the ingredients are free from extra sodium and other mystery ingredients. [Cranberry relish](#) is easy to make and if you chop up some oranges or tangerines to toss in, it will have a nice zing and need less sugar. Chopped walnuts or pecans can add a gourmet twist. Sampling a *little* of this and that is enjoyable and can prevent feeling over-stuffed!

If you like sweet potato casserole try pre-cooking fresh yams or sweet potatoes until soft. Scrape out the insides and whip with orange juice, a little brown sugar, a touch of cinnamon, nutmeg and pepper. If you pick small, pretty potatoes and scoop out the middles carefully leaving a bit of the baked part along the sides and bottom, you can even stuff the skins and eat them like you might twice-baked russets. This ups your nutrition a notch or two.



Did you know you can roll out a really thin pie crust using your existing favorite recipe? And for the pie-filling, use evaporated skim milk and egg-whites (2 whites for each egg) for a lower-calorie, yet equally [delicious pumpkin pie](#). It's the all-spice, that gives the pumpkin pie its heavenly aroma and that just-right combination of spices. If you prefer a topping, try a tablespoon of frozen vanilla yogurt or a light-whipped dairy topping.

As generations, friends and families gather together to share a meal, may you find many reasons to give thanks!