



First Thanksgiving meal a kitchen & table checklist

Hosting Thanksgiving for the first time? Avoid all the major kitchen and entertaining meltdowns by making sure you have the right gear for the turkey, sides, dessert and table. Bonus points: You'll use a lot of these essentials in your everyday cooking and entertaining, too.

Thanksgiving cooking essentials

- Kitchen knives & knife sharpener.** Good, sharp knives speed up prep time.
- Casserole pans & baking dishes.** Go for pretty oven-to-table versions. Or transfer food from your workhorse casserole into something more attractive (as long as there isn't a topping—like marshmallows or fried onions—that you don't want to mess up).
- Aluminum foil.** For lining baking sheets, warming rolls in the oven, tenting the turkey and wrapping leftovers.

Pie: baking & serving

- Rolling pin.** If you are excited about making your own crust.
- Pie pan.** Buy stoneware or glass for oven-to-table functionality and good looks.
- Pie server.** Do right by your homemade dessert with a pie server that will make slicing and serving a no-brainer.

Turkey: cooking & serving

- Oven thermometer.** If your oven is older or at all unreliable, use a thermometer to make sure you and your oven are on the same page.
- Roasting pan.** Love a good roast (think beef, lamb, pork, chicken or Thanksgiving turkey)? Get a roasting pan and rack you can use again and again. Using a disposable pan? Place it on a sturdy sheet pan for support.
- Turkey baster.** The most common approach is to use a turkey baster to gather and apply the rendered fat from the roasting pan to the turkey. It also helps with getting the fat and juices from the pan to make gravy.
- Meat thermometer.** It's the only way to verify that your hours-per-pound cooking math was correct and to avoid any misadventures with undercooked meat.
- Carving set.** The extra-long blade makes carving easier and creates clean, even slices. Use the long fork to steady (and serve) the meat without piercing it, so the juices stay in the meat.
- Carving board.** The groove that goes around the edge of the board captures juices while you carve (for adding to gravy and keeping things tidy).
- Serving platter.** A nice-looking wooden carving board can double for serving in a pinch. But a serving platter lets you ignore the post-carving carcass and mess (at least until after dinner).
- Gravy gear.** You need either a gravy boat or a bowl and small ladle. Or just make peace with getting gravy all over your tablecloth.

Green veggies: cooking

- Stock pot.** For steaming and boiling.
- Sheet pans.** For roasting and baking.

Potatoes: peeling & mashing

- Vegetable peeler.** The best tool for the job. Also works to shave parmesan, zest fruit and peel any other veggie or fruit.
- Potato masher or potato ricer.** A masher is great for making rustic mashed potatoes; it can create smooth potatoes, too, but will take more time. For the fluffiest, smoothest potatoes, use a ricer.

Thanksgiving table: setting & seating

- Table and chairs.** Will you be able to seat all of your guests or is it time to buy a foldable table and chairs?
- Dishware.** Are you serving a side salad? Soup? Make sure you have salad/dessert plates and soup bowls on hand. And enough dinner plates to serve all your guests.
- Drinkware.** Glasses for water and stemware for wine. Cups or mugs for coffee and tea.
- Wine bottle opener.** Or don't get one and plan on a boxed wine theme instead.
- Cutlery.** Dinner knives and forks; soup spoons if you're serving soup. Dessert forks and/or teaspoons (or be prepared to wash your dinner cutlery before dessert and coffee).
- Linens.** Tablecloth, napkins, nice tea towels for wrapping up tired-looking casserole dishes.
- Cream and sugar containers.** Because that cardboard carton of cream will look out of place on your pretty Thanksgiving table.