

Thanksgiving Timeline

Two Weeks to Ten Days Ahead

- Verify your guest list. Call & confirm as necessary.
- Decide on your menu. If you are asking guests to bring dishes, confirm their additions to the feast.
- Plan out your table and decorations. Are you going formal? Do your tablecloth and napkins need washed and pressed?
- Double check your serving pieces against your menu. Make sure you have all the serving pieces you need. Make arrangements to borrow where needed. Do it now, lol! Nothing is worse than asking a guest to bring a large enough platter for the turkey, only to find out they've forgotten.
- Clean out your fridge to make room for all the Thanksgiving goodies that will soon find their way into your house.
- Order your turkey if you're planning on cooking a fresh one. Conventional wisdom suggests that you plan for about one pound per guest.

One Week Ahead

- Make a shopping list. Double check your own supplies (including what was included in your Hostess Pack). Compare your list to the sale ads and consider shopping accordingly.

Three Days Ahead

- Pull out all the pieces you are planning to use for serving. On a post-it note, write what will be going into each dish and place the note in the dish. Stack your bowls and platters together with the post-its in them. It will make your Thanksgiving Day go much quicker, especially if you have a lot of volunteers helping you dish out the food. {Thanks to flylady.net for this wonderful advice!}.
- Cover your serving pieces with a sheet to keep them dust free.
- Start thawing your turkey, if you purchased a frozen one.

Two Days Ahead

- Start working on dishes that will keep well:
 - Make Cranberry Sauce
 - Make Pies

The Day Before

- Chop vegetables (except potatoes) needed for each dish, bag them individually, and place in the refrigerator.
- If you are making rolls or bread, start that today (especially if you are using the overnight recipe)
- Wash and cook sweet potatoes (for either Sally or Tanya's sweet potato recipe)
- Make the green salad.
- Make any appetizer platters you are planning on having (cheese & crackers, vegetables, etc)
- Consider setting the table and covering it with a sheet (thanks again, Flylady!).
- Double check your guest list, your serving pieces list, your menu.
- Purchase any last minute items you may need (whip cream, etc).
- Determine what time your turkey should go in the oven based on what time you expect dinner to be served. Don't forget to add an hour to that time to allow for Turkey Resting Time (lol!)
- If you are brining your turkey, start it this evening. See Tanya's menu for instructions.

The Day Of

In the Morning

- Prepare your stuffing.
- Wash, peel, and cube potatoes for mashed potatoes. Place in a pot of water and set aside until ready to cook.
- Start stock for pan gravy.

- Clean as you go.
- At your appointed time, place your turkey in the oven.
- Put together additional casseroles, such as sweet potato and/or green bean casserole.
- Place butter dish and salt & pepper shakers on the table.

One Hour Before

- Your turkey should be done roasting and is ready for resting. Make sure you cover the turkey with foil so it stays warm.
- Cook the mashed potatoes.
- Steam your carrots and make Brown Sugar Butter Sauce.
- Heat the rolls.
- Carve the turkey

Time for Dinner

- Place everything in its assigned dish and place on the table, along with designated serving utensils.
- Enjoy your friends and family.

Sally's Thanksgiving Dinner

Appetizer Trays

- Cheese & Cracker Tray - Dill Havarti, Creamy Havarti & Pepper Jack will be my choices this year!
- Cream Cheese with Pick-a-pepper sauce over the top of it and wheat thins will be another
- Vegetable platter - Celery Sticks, Baby Carrots, some cherry tomatoes & Ranch (Recipe below)
- Fruit Platter - Apples, Bananas, Pineapple, Orange wedges

Sally's Green Salad

- Red & Green Leaf Lettuce
- Carrot coins
- Onion rings
- Sliced celery
- Sliced Mushrooms (I peel mine so they are perfectly white... Not necessary, but always pretty!)
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Gram's Homemade Ranch Dressing.

Grams' Homemade Ranch Dressing

- 1 Cup buttermilk
- 1 Cup mayonnaise
- ½ tsp salt
- Generous sprinkle pepper
- 1 tbsp onion powder
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- Enough parsley to make it have some green flecks

Put into blender. Pulse. Add salt & pepper, onion powder, and garlic powder. Pulse. Add enough parsley to make it have some green flecks. Pulse in blender a bit more. Taste and adjust to your liking.

You can also add dill if you want or chipotle or avocado. This is great plain but can be adapted for your creativity.

Brown Sugar Butter Sauce

- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup brown sugar

Melt on stovetop. Simmer on low stirring constantly until the sugar melts. Pour over carrots/sweet potatoes/butternut squash.

Baby Carrots with Brown Sugar Butter Sauce

Steam Carrots. Serve topped with brown sugar sauce.

Sweet Potatoes with Brown Sugar Sauce 'n Pecans

Wash potatoes. Cut off tips of ends. Wrap in tin foil. Cook 1 hour at 400°F. Cool overnight. Peel the next day. Cut in rounds. Arrange nicely on platter. Pour Brown Sugar Sauce over. Garnish with pecans!

Aunt Rosie's Sour Cream Mashed Potatoes

- 5 lbs baking potatoes
- 1 stick butter
- 1 container cream cheese
- 1 container sour cream
- Onion powder to taste
- Chives to taste
- Salt & pepper to taste

Wash, peel & cut 5 pounds of Baking potatoes. Boil them until cooked. Drain them. Put them in the mixer. Add 1 stick butter. One container Cream Cheese & one container sour cream. Beat until combined. Add onion powder, chives, salt & pepper to taste. Spoon into casserole dish. Add little dollops of butter on top, and bake at 350 until slightly browned and butter on top has melted.

Grams' Stuffing

- 1 onion
- 4-5 stalks celery
- 1 apple, grated
- 1 can chopped water chestnuts
- Raisins
- 8 ounces butter
- Apple juice
- Chicken stock
- Black olives

Sauté onion, celery, apple, chopped water chestnuts, and raisins to taste in butter. After all is soft and flavors have blended add pre seasoned stuff cubes. Then add a bit of apple juice, and some broth until just moist. Add some chopped black olives. Cover & bake until done. Uncover and lightly brown top!

Tanya's Thanksgiving Day Favorites

Brining the Bird

If you only do one thing new this year, consider brining your turkey! We tried it for the first time a couple of years ago, and we'll never go back! Here's the recipe we use - from my kitchen hero, Alton Brown, from the Food Network.

- 1 cup kosher salt
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar
- 1 gallon vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon black peppercorns
- 1/2 tablespoon allspice berries
- 1/2 tablespoon candied ginger
- 1 gallon iced water

1. Combine all brine ingredients, except ice water, in a stockpot, and bring to a boil. Stir to dissolve solids, then remove from heat, cool to room temperature, and refrigerate until thoroughly chilled.
2. Early on the day of cooking, (or late the night before) combine the brine and ice water in a clean 5-gallon bucket. Place thawed turkey breast side down in brine, cover, and refrigerate or set in cool area (like a basement) for 6 hours. Turn turkey over once, half way through brining.
3. Remove bird from brine and rinse inside and out with cold water. Discard brine.
4. Place bird on roasting rack inside wide, low pan and pat dry with paper towels. Prepare turkey as usual!

Fruit Fritters

When our whole family gets together (and you can hear us from miles around there's so many of us!), this is a Thanksgiving (and Christmas) must.

- vegetable oil
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup milk, buttermilk, soy milk, etc
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon melted butter
- 2 egg whites at room temperature
- juice of 1 lemon
- 4 large apples, peeled, cored, sliced into 1/4 inch slices. We also use pears, firm bananas... no fruit is safe from being 'frittered'!
- powdered sugar

1. Batter dry ingredients: Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Batter wet ingredients: Whisk together milk, egg yolk, melted butter. Add dry ingredients to wet slowly, watching out for lumps. Set aside.
2. Pour lemon juice into a shallow dish. Add and turn to coat apple/pear/etc slices. Set aside.
3. Heat the oil to 375 in a large heavy pot or deep fryer.
4. Beat egg whites until peaks are stiff but not dry. Fold into batter.
5. A few at a time, dip fruit slices in the batter, letting excess drip off. Drop immediately into hot oil and deep fry, turning once, until puffed and golden brown. Drain fritters on paper towels. Can keep warm in a 25°F oven (we eat them as we go!). Sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve!

Glazed Pineapple Rings

We're doing turkey this year, but if you're doing ham, here's an easy accompaniment.

- 1 ripe pineapple
- 4-5 tablespoons melted butter
- 1/2 cup sugar

Preheat broiler. Butter broiling pan (critical!). Prepare pineapple: trim, peel, core, and cut into about 1/2 inch slices. Arrange slices on pan and drizzle with melted butter. Sprinkle with the sugar. Broil one side only until hot and golden, 5-8 minutes.

Mashed Potatoes

I'm not allowed to make the mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving anymore. The family has a long memory - years ago I made garlic mashed potatoes that were so garlicky they were inedible. I've played with recipes since then, and here's my favorite 'basic' mashed potatoes. From here, add cream cheese, sour cream, roasted garlic, herbs, or what-have-you. But go easy on the garlic, or you may end up banished like me...

- about 3 pounds baking potatoes, peeled and cubed (or run through your apple-peeler-corer-slicer for quicker cooking)
 - 3/4 to 1 cup milk or buttermilk
 - 6 tablespoons butter, room temperature
 - Salt and pepper to taste
1. Preheat broiler. Butter broiling pan (critical!). Prepare pineapple: trim, peel, core, and cut into about 1/2 inch slices. Arrange slices on pan and drizzle with melted butter. Sprinkle with the sugar. Broil one side only until hot and golden, 5-8 minutes.
 2. Place potatoes in a medium pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil, lower heat to a simmer. Add a generous pinch of salt and continue to simmer until potatoes are fork tender, about 20 minutes (less if you used the a-p-c-s). When potato are done, drain and return potatoes to pot to dry slightly. Run potatoes through food mill or potato ricer into pot, or just mash. Heat milk in saucepan. Add hot milk to potatoes, over heat, until smooth. Add butter and beat until finely textured and fluffy. If adding additional ingredients, fold in.

Sweet Potato and Apple Stuffing

When I'm a guest and am bringing a dish to the Thanksgiving meal, here's one of my favorites. Easy to make and a great make-ahead dish.

- 2 pounds sweet potatoes, unpeeled
 - 2 tablespoons butter (unsalted preferred)
 - 4 tablespoons butter, cut into small pieces (for dotting)
 - 1 1/2 cups onions, chopped
 - 1/2 cup celery, chopped
 - 2 cups green apples, diced
 - 1/2 cup apple cider
 - 2 cups dry, unseasoned breadcrumbs
 - 1/4 cup chicken or vegetable stock
 - 1/2 teaspoon salt
 - 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
 - 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 - 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 - 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1. In a large pot, bring water to a boil and simmer, covered, the sweet potatoes. When potatoes are tender, drain, let cool, remove skins, and mash in a large bowl.
 2. In a large skillet on medium-high heat, melt the 2 tablespoons butter. Add onions, celery, salt, and pepper, cooking and stirring 5 minutes, or until veggies are tender. Add apples, cider, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, cooking and stirring 3-4 minutes until apples are tender but still firm.
 3. Add skillet ingredients and breadcrumbs to sweet potatoes and stir in. Season to taste and adjust moisture, if necessary, with stock.
 4. Turn into a large, shallow buttered baking dish, dot with cut butter, and bake at 350 for 30-45 minutes, until browned and bubbly.

Our Blogger's Thanksgiving Favorites

Caprese Tomato Cups

JoAnn Williams

- Cherry Tomatoes
- Feta Cheese
- Red Wine Vinegar
- 1 Shallot
- Basil
- Coarsely Ground Black Pepper
- Good Extra Virgin Olive Oil

1. Cut Cherry Tomatoes in half lengthwise and scoop out the pulp using a melon baller.
2. Finely Dice the shallot
3. Slice the basil into thin strips by stacking the leaves one on top of another and then rolling tightly (cigarette fashion). Start on one end of the basil leaves and thinly slice. When you gently toss the leaves should now be in lovely curly strips.
4. Mix the feta cheese, shallot, and basil. Toss in a bit of the vinegar and the pepper.
5. Spoon this mixture into the tomato cups and drizzle with olive oil if desired.

Favorite Poultry Rub

Amaree Matthews

- 1 1/2 T Brown Sugar
- 1/2 T Paprika
- 2 t Tarragon
- 1 1/2 t Black Pepper
- 1 t Garlic Powder
- 1 t Marjoram
- 1 t Onion Powder
- 1/2 t Sage
- 1/2 t Thyme
- 1/2 t Salt (may need a little more)
- 1/2 t Savory
- 1/4-1/2 t Cayenne Pepper

1. Mix well, rub between the skin and the meat, then roast! (This is GREAT on Turkeys!) Or rub onto Chicken Breasts :-)

Green Bean Bundles

Whitney Donohue

- 1 1/2 lbs green beans, washed and trimmed
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon packed brown sugar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 8 ounces of bacon, each piece cut in half width-wise

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil over high heat, and blanch the beans 3-4 minutes, or until they are bright green in color and pliable but still very crunchy. Drain and run them under cold water. Place in a shallow, ovenproof casserole dish and pat dry with a paper towel.
2. In a small saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the garlic, mustard, salt, and brown sugar. Pour the mixture over the green beans, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or overnight.
3. Preheat the oven to 375. Gather 8-9 beans at a time and make bundles. Wrap with a slice of the (halved) bacon, and lie seam-side down in a greased baking sheet or casserole dish. Pour remaining marinade over the top.
4. Bake, uncovered, for 45 minutes, or until the bacon is cooked through and the beans look wrinkled. Cook under the broiler for an additional 1-2 minutes to crisp the bacon even more, if desired. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Scalloped Potatoes with Thyme and Bay

Jeanne Gibbons

Scalloped potatoes are a great side dish for a holiday table. You can use whole or 1% milk in this recipe if you don't have or want heavy cream and it will still turn out good. You can substitute any good melting cheese like Havarti or Gruyere for the Cheddar if you would like a different taste. This dish is great reheated the next day!

- 2 Tb butter
 - 1 medium onion, minced
 - 2 medium cloves of garlic, minced or pressed
 - 1 fresh thyme leaves, minced
 - 1 1/4 tsp salt
 - 1/2 tsp black pepper
 - 1 1/2 lbs (about 5 medium) russet potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8 inch thick (you could use a mandolin if you're careful)
 - 1 C chicken broth
 - 1 C heavy cream
 - 2 bay leaves
 - 4 oz cheddar cheese, shredded
1. Adjust the oven rack to the middle position and preheat to 425 degrees.
 2. Melt the butter in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. When the foaming subsides, add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until soft and lightly browned, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic, thyme, salt and pepper and cook about 30 seconds. Add the potatoes, broth, cream and bay leaves and bring to a simmer. Cover and reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the potatoes are almost tender (a paring knife can be slipped into and out of a potato with some resistance and the potatoes are barely opaque) about 10 minutes. Fish out and discard the bay leaves.
 3. Transfer the mixture to a 8 inch square baking pan. Sprinkle evenly with the cheese. Bake until the cream is bubbling around the edges and the top is golden brown, about 15 - 20 minutes. Cool at least 10 minutes before serving so the dish can become more solid.

Cranberry Tangerine (or Orange) Sauce

Amaree Matthews

- 2 cups Fresh Cranberries
 - 3/4 cup sugar
 - 3/4 cup water
 - 1/2 tangerine (or orange juice)
 - 1/2 inch knob ginger, grated
 - zest of 1 tangerine or orange
1. Place all of the ingredients in a medium saucepan and cook for 20 minutes over medium0-medium high heat, stirring occasionally, until it is reduced and thickens. Serve hot or cold.

Crusty Sweet Potatoes

Jeanne Gibbons

Our family never could wait for dessert at Thanksgiving. Here's a sweet potato dish that tastes like pumpkin pie on your plate, a different dish than the traditional marshmallow-topped potato bake. This dish is a must at our Thanksgiving table.

- 3 C sweet potatoes (about 4 good-sized ones)
- 1/2 C sugar
- 1/2 C butter
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1/3 C melted butter
- 1 C light brown sugar
- 1/2 C flour
- 1 C chopped pecans

Boil and mash the potatoes, measure out your three cups. Mix potatoes with sugar, butter, eggs, vanilla and milk. Put in a baking dish and heat at 350 degrees for 30 - 40 minutes, until the edges of the casserole puff up slightly. Mix melted butter, brown sugar, flour and pecans and pour over sweet potato mixture. Heat 5 - 10 minutes longer until top is crispy.

Yam and Apple Casserole

Amaree Matthews

I make this every year and it makes my mouth water even thinking of it. Not many of my family will eat it (yams!), but it is my absolute FAVORITE!!

- 6 med. yams
- 3 or 4 apples (I prefer granny-smith, but if you're leaving the peel on, a nice tart red baking apple would be good too), cored, peeled (optional), and sliced
- 1/2 cup butter
- 3 T corn starch
- 1 C sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 C water
- 2 T lemon juice

1. Parboil yams about 20 minutes. Cool, peel, and slice. Layer in buttered casserole dish (9x13), alternating the yams with apple slices.
2. Melt butter in small pan. Add cornstarch, sugar, and salt. Blend well. Add water; cook and stir until thickened. Add lemon juice. Pour sauce over yams and apples.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Fruity Cranberry Salad

Amaree Matthews

This is one of my favorite left-overs. I eat it for breakfast every year, IF there are left-overs!

- One bag of fresh cranberries, chopped
- 2 green apples, cored and chopped
- 1 can crushed pineapple, drained, juice reserved (do not use fresh pineapple, or the jello won't set)
- 1 navel orange, peeled and chopped (or a can or two of mandarin oranges, syrup drained)
- 1 cup pecans or walnuts, chopped (optional)
- 1 box Blackberry Fusion Jell-O (or Cranberry, or Raspberry)

1. Make jello as directed, substituting the pineapple juice for part of the water.
2. Put all of the fruit into an 8x8 baking dish.
3. Pour the jello on top of the fruit.
4. Stir.
5. Cool and set.
6. Grab a spoon, hide in a closet, and eat it all.

Garland's Lodge Butternut Squash Soup

Jeanne Gibbons

Chef Amanda Stine's Butternut Squash Soup is amazing! Sweet, but not too sweet. Rich, but not too rich. It's work, but for a special occasion this soup is a great starter. You can make it a day ahead up to adding the cream. When you're ready to serve, reheat it, add the cream, then continue with the toppings. Note: This soup works well using the equivalent amount of pears instead of apples.

Soup:

- 1 Tb butter
- 1 Tb olive oil
- 3-4 C peeled butternut squash, cut into 1 inch chunks
- 1 C chopped celery, about 2 stalks
- 2 C yellow onion, chopped
- 1 C carrots, peeled and chopped
- 1 1/2 C tart apples, chopped into 1/2 inch dice (use Macintosh, Romes or Jonagolds)
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp dried marjoram
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper powder
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 7 cups chicken stock or water
- 1 C apple cider
- 1/4 C heavy cream
- salt and white pepper to taste

Toasted Pecan Garnish:

- 1/2 C chopped pecans
- about 1 tsp olive oil (just enough to coat the pecans)
- pinch of salt
- pinch of sugar
- tiniest dusting of cayenne pepper

Nutmeg Whipped Cream:

- 1/3 c heavy cream
- good pinch of kosher salt, to taste
- pinch of nutmeg

1. In a 4-6 quart stockpot, heat the oil and butter over medium heat. Add the squash, celery, onion, carrots and apples, mixing well. Cover and sweat for 5 minutes. Add the thyme, marjoram, cumin, cinnamon, cayenne and 1 tsp of the kosher salt, mixing well. Cover the pot and sweat for 5 more minutes.
2. Add the stock and bring to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat slightly and cook for 30 minutes. Remove from the heat and cool for 10 minutes. Add the apple cider. Puree in batches in a food processor until very smooth and transfer to a clean, heavy-bottomed pan. Add the heavy cream. If the soup is too thick, thin with a little water. Salt and pepper to taste.

To make the garnish:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Toss the ingredients together and place in a pie tin. Bake for 5 minutes, until fragrant. WATCH THEM CLOSELY. They will burn. Use a kitchen timer. You can do this in a pan on the stove top, but you must keep stirring the nuts so they don't scorch.

To make the nutmeg whipped cream:

2. Whip the cream to soft peaks. Add the salt and nutmeg and continue whipping to stiff peaks.
3. Top each serving of soup with the toasted pecan garnish. Using a small scoop, put a dollop of whipped cream on each serving of hot soup, so it just starts to melt as you serve it. Makes 8 - 10 servings.

Paula Deen's Apple Butter Pumpkin Pie *Whitney Donohue*

- 1 cup apple butter
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten
- 3/4 cup evaporated milk
- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie shell
- sweetened whipped cream, for garnish
- Pecans, if desired

Preheat oven to 425°F. Combine apple butter, pumpkin, sugar, salt and spices in a bowl. Stir in eggs. Gradually add milk and mix well. Pour into pie shell. Bake for about 40 minutes or until set. Garnish with whipped cream and maybe some pecans.

Egg Nog Pie *Amarée Matthews*

- 1 9" pie shell, baked (or a graham cracker pie crust would do very well, I imagine!)
- 1 envelope unflavored gelatin (like Knotts)
- 3 T cold water
- 2 C egg nog
- 1/4 C sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 tsp almond extract
- 1 C heavy cream
- nutmeg for garnish

Combine gelatin and water to soften gelatin. Warm eggnog over low heat and add gelatin mixture and stir until gelatin is completely dissolved and eggnog is warm. Chill until partially set (about 1 1/2-2 hours). Beat eggnog mixture until smooth; add salt, sugar, vanilla, and almond extract. Mix until smooth. Beat heavy cream in a separate bowl until stiff, then fold into the eggnog mixture. Pour the mixture into the pie crust and garnish with nutmeg. Chill until ready to serve. Serve with extra whipping cream if you dare! ;-)

*On occasion, my mom bought 8" pre-made pie crusts. So, when I was baking pumpkin pies and making eggnog pie, I always had a little batter left over. So, I would fill the pie crust with the remaining pumpkin pie batter, bake as directed, cool, and then pour the remaining eggnog pie mixture on top of it. Thus was the birth of "Pump-nog Pie." It has become a favorite. There are also recipes for pumpkin-eggnog pie, where you substitute the eggnog for the evaporated milk, and it's good too, but the layers in the pump-nog pie are fun.

Caramel Apple Pie *Amarée Matthews*

- Unbaked crust for a Double-Crust pie
- 3 pounds Golden Delicious or Granny Smith apples (about 8), peeled, cored, cut into 3/4-inch-thick wedges
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon of butter, cut into small cubes

1. Combine apple wedges and 1/4 cup flour in large bowl and toss to coat. Let stand while preparing caramel.
2. Stir sugar and 1/4 cup water in heavy large saucepan over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat and boil until syrup turns deep amber color, brushing pan sides with wet pastry brush and swirling pan occasionally, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Add butter and remaining 2 tablespoons water (mixture will bubble vigorously). Return to heat and stir until smooth. Pour caramel over apples; toss to coat. Let stand until apples release juices, tossing occasionally, about 10 minutes.

3. Position rack in bottom third of oven and preheat to 425°F. Roll out dough on floured work surface to 14-inch round. Transfer to 9 1/2-inch-diameter glass pie dish with 1 3/4-inch-high sides. Spoon apple mixture into prepared crust. Put the small cubes of butter on top of the filling, and then place the top crust on top of the filling. Seal the crust, decoratively crimp the edges, and cut some steam vents into the top crust.
4. Place pie in oven (and if desired, a cookie sheet with some foil on the rack below it to catch the juices.... It oozes!), and bake at 425 for 20 minutes. Reduce the temperature to 350 and bake until the juices are thick and bubbly through the vents in the crust, roughly 40 more minutes, covering the crust if needed to prevent burning.
5. Remove from oven and let it cool for at least 30 minutes. Can be eaten warm or cold.

Cranberry-Orange Cheesecake with Chocolate Crust

Amaree Matthews

Crust

- 1 9-ounce box chocolate wafer cookies, broken
- 2 ounces bittersweet (not unsweetened) or semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Filling

- 4 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 1/2 cups sugar 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons grated orange peel
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch dissolved in 1 tablespoon water
- 2 cups fresh cranberries
- 1/2 teaspoon grated orange peel

For crust:

Preheat oven to 325°F. Finely grind cookies and chocolate in processor. Add butter; blend until moist clumps form. Using plastic wrap as aid, press crumb mixture onto bottom and 1 1/4 inches up sides of 9-inch-diameter spring form pan with 2 3/4-inch-high sides. Bake until set, about 8 minutes. Cool completely.

For filling:

Increase oven temperature to 350°F. Wrap 2 layers of heavy-duty foil around bottom and up sides of spring form pan. Using electric mixer, beat cream cheese and sugar in large bowl until light. Beat in flour. Beat in eggs, 1 at a time, just until blended. Beat in orange peel and vanilla.

Pour filling into crust. Place spring form pan in large roasting pan. Fill roasting pan with enough hot water to come halfway up sides of spring form pan. Bake until filling is just set in center but still moves slightly, about 55 minutes. Remove cake from water bath; transfer to rack and cool completely, about 4 hours. Cover and chill overnight.

For topping:

Stir sugar and water in medium saucepan over medium-low heat until sugar dissolves. Increase heat to medium; add cornstarch mixture and bring to simmer. Add cranberries; cook until beginning to pop, stirring often, about 3 minutes. Stir in orange peel. Cool completely. Cover and chill overnight. (Cheesecake and cranberry mixture can be made 2 days ahead. Keep refrigerated.)

Run knife around top edge of cheesecake to loosen. Release pan sides. Top cheesecake with cranberry mixture. Chill until set, about 1 hour.