

Thanksgiving Hosting Timeline

Thanksgiving 2026 is Thursday, November 26. Tick each task; dates are approximate.

4 WEEKS OUT

around Oct 29

- ☐ Set the guest count and send invites
- ☐ Pick the menu; assign dishes guests bring
- ☐ Check seats, plates, glasses, serving pieces
- ☐ Decide fresh or frozen turkey; order if needed

3 WEEKS OUT

around Nov 5

- ☐ Check tools: knife, board, roasting pan, thermometer
- ☐ Borrow or buy only what is missing
- ☐ Buy shelf-stable items (stock, flour, spices)
- ☐ Plan the table and set a \$50 cap

2 WEEKS OUT

around Nov 12

- ☐ Deep clean kitchen and guest bathroom
- ☐ Clear one fridge shelf and freezer space
- ☐ Prep the guest room if anyone stays over
- ☐ Write an oven schedule (what bakes when)

1 WEEK OUT

around Nov 19

- ☐ Thaw frozen turkey in fridge: ~1 day per 4-5 lb
- ☐ Buy drinks, foil, wrap, leftover containers
- ☐ Sticky-note each serving dish with its food
- ☐ Confirm who brings what; final headcount

MON-TUE

Nov 23-24

- ☐ Shop fresh produce, dairy, bread
- ☐ Make cranberry sauce and pie dough
- ☐ Chop onions, celery, herbs; store sealed
- ☐ Set the table Tuesday night

WEDNESDAY

Nov 25

- ☐ Bake pies; assemble make-ahead casseroles
- ☐ Chill drinks; set up a drinks station
- ☐ Empty dishwasher, trash and recycling
- ☐ Lay out serving spoons and the carving set

THANKSGIVING MORNING

Nov 26

- ☐ Turkey in the oven on your recipe schedule
- ☐ Empty the dishwasher again
- ☐ 15-minute tidy: bathroom, entry, counters
- ☐ Put out snacks so guests stay out of the way

LAST 2 HOURS

dinner

- ☐ Check turkey: 165 F in the thickest part
- ☐ Rest the turkey; bake sides meanwhile
- ☐ Make gravy, warm rolls, light candles
- ☐ Leftovers in the fridge within 2 hours

Thanksgiving Hosting Checklist

Kitchen tools, budget table setting and leftovers, on one page.

KITCHEN TOOLS

check 3 weeks out

- ☐ Sharp chef knife + paring knife
- ☐ Large cutting board (oil a wooden one a few days ahead)
- ☐ Roasting pan with rack, big enough for your bird
- ☐ Instant-read meat thermometer
- ☐ Large pot, skillet and sheet pans for sides
- ☐ Carving knife/fork, potato masher, whisk for gravy
- ☐ Apron and plenty of kitchen towels

BUDGET TABLE (UNDER \$50)

plan 3 weeks out, set Tuesday

- ☐ Plates and glasses you own (mix-and-match is fine)
- ☐ Neutral runner: fabric remnant, linen scarf or kraft paper
- ☐ Mini pumpkins, gourds, apples or pears down the middle
- ☐ Thrifted candle holders + unscented candles
- ☐ Cloth napkins with a simple fold and a herb sprig
- ☐ Handwritten kraft paper place cards

LEFTOVERS

after dinner

- ☐ Fridge within 2 hours of serving
- ☐ Shallow containers; carve meat off the bone
- ☐ Label each container with the date
- ☐ Eat within 3-4 days or freeze; send guests home with plates

Notes / who is bringing what:
