

SparkRecipes®

Trim Thanksgiving Feast with 9 recipes from Chef Meg



Thanksgiving is a time for family, gratitude, and, of course, food. The typical holiday meal can have more than 4,500 calories and 229 grams of fat, according to the Caloric Control Council. That's more than two days worth of food for most of us! Butter, cream and white bread seem to be lurking in almost every dish, and the meal never seems to end.

For those of us who are trying lead healthier lives, Thanksgiving needn't be a time to forget all our beliefs about eating right and moderation. It is possible to eat right and still enjoy yourself on Turkey Day!

Chef Meg, World Master Chef and SparkRecipes' Healthy Cooking Expert, has created a three-course Thanksgiving meal that will clock in around 500 calories! Dessert will add just about 150 calories.

Chef Meg's Thanksgiving feast will save you 510 calories and 39 grams of fat over the most modest of traditional spreads.

These nine recipes include a veggie-rich soup to start your meal off right, the juiciest turkey you'll ever taste, several sides, two desserts, plus a cranberry relish that will have the store-bought jelly quivering in its can.





Chef Meg's Sweet Potato Tarts

Ingredients

8 oz phyllo dough, thawed
2 c sweet potato, steamed
or roasted, flesh only
1/2 c dark brown sugar
1/2 t salt
1/2 t pumpkin pie spice mix,
plus additional
1/2 t for dusting

1/4 c low-fat evaporated
milk 1 t vanilla
1/2 c egg substitute or
2 egg whites
1/2 c fat free whipped
topping

Try these light and low-fat personal pies for dessert during the fall. They're a great substitute for pumpkin pie or sweet potato casserole.

NOTE: To boost the fiber, you can look for whole-wheat phyllo dough, which is available in the healthy food freezer section of many grocery stores.

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 24 mini muffin cups with nonstick cooking spray. Remove phyllo dough from packaging. Slice into 1 inch strips, then cut each strip into 2 inch segments. Using 3 layers at a time, fill the cups, spraying cooking spray between each layer. Repeat process three times. Remove skin from sweet potatoes and allow to cool to room temperature. Place sweet potatoes, sugar, spice mix, milk, and vanilla in the bowl of a food processor. Blend until smooth. Add eggs and blend just to incorporate. Fill cups to the top of the muffin pan. Bake 18-20 minutes, until custard is set and pastry starts to brown. Once cooled, top with 1 teaspoon of fat free whipped topping (optional--calories not included) and a dusting of pumpkin pie spice mix.

Makes 12 servings (two tarts per serving).
2 tarts 151 calories 2 g fat



Chef Meg's Vegetable and Fruit Stuffing

Ingredients

- 10 cups wheat bread, (a dense bakery bread), cut into cubes
- 2 strips turkey bacon, stretched and diced
- 1 1/4 cup chicken or vegetable stock, low sodium
- 1 T butter, unsalted
- 2 yellow onions, diced
- 5 granny smith apples, peeled, cored and diced
- 2 cups fennel, chopped
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- pinch salt
- 1/2 t pepper
- 1/2 t oregano
- 6 dates, dried and chopped or 6 apricots, dried and chopped
- 1/2 C egg beaters
- 2 T parsley, Flat leaf, chopped

Whole wheat bread gives this side staying power. The fruits and vegetables bulk up the dish, so a little goes a long way. A bit of turkey bacon adds another layer of flavor without adding many calories.

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Toast bread cubes until light golden in color, about 12-15 minutes; set aside and cool. Increase oven temperature to 375 degrees. Place turkey bacon in a heavy saucepan. On top of stove cook over moderate heat just until the fat is melted and the meat starts to brown. Remove from pan; chop into a small dice and reserve. Drain off any excess fat and discard. Melt butter in the saucepan. Add onions and saute until golden in color. To the onions, add the diced bacon, apples, fennel and celery. Cook, stirring for 3-5 minutes. Spray with pan spray a 13 X 9 baking dish. Combine toasted bread, vegetable mixture, and stock to a large bowl. Mix in herbs, seasonings, fruit, and beaten eggs. Transfer to baking dish. Cover with foil that has been sprayed with pan spray. Cook 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake until top is browned; about 20 minutes.



Chef Meg's Roasted Root Vegetables

Ingredients

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| 1 T olive oil | 2 parsnips, peeled and diced |
| 1 red onion, sliced | 1 t dried rosemary |
| 4 cloves garlic, peeled
and cut in half | 1 t dried thyme |
| 2 carrots, peeled and diced | 1 pinch salt |
| 1 turnip, peeled and diced | 1/2 t black pepper |
| 1 yam or sweet potato, peeled
and diced | 1 T balsamic vinegar, optional |

This recipe sings of the fall and early winter harvest. Take advantage of the local farmers market and buy whatever root vegetables they have. I like a bite to the vegetables, so I drizzle a small amount of balsamic vinegar over the vegetables while they are still hot. This side dish is quite affordable: about 60 cents a serving for the vegetables!

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray a baking sheet pan with nonstick cooking spray. Combine all ingredients in a mixing bowl; toss to combine. Place mixture on a sheet pan. Bake 30 minutes, turning vegetables every 10 minutes until vegetables are tender and slightly browned. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar before serving.

Makes 8 servings (1/2 cup).

Number of Servings: 8

1/2 cup 82 calories 2 g fat



Chef Meg's Pumpkin Pie Spice Mix

Ingredients

1/2 t mace, ground
1 T cinnamon, ground
1 t ginger, ground
1/2 t cloves, ground
1/2 t allspice, ground
1/2 t nutmeg, ground

There's no need to buy pumpkin pie spice. You can easily make your own at home. And it makes a great hostess gift for any fall event! Feel free to double or triple this recipe!

Directions

Combine all. Store in an airtight container away from the sunlight for up to 3 months.
Makes 2 tablespoons.



Chef Meg's Cranberry Relish

Ingredients

3/4 c sugar
1/2 lemon, juiced
2 oranges, zest and fruit, discard pith and membrane
2 c cranberries, fresh or frozen
1/4 t cinnamon, ground
pinch cloves, ground

Toss the canned cranberry jelly and use this homemade version instead. It's ready in no time, has less sugar than the store-bought stuff, and is full of healthy fruit! While you might question why this recipe needs the amount of sugar it contains, you'll understand as soon as you taste a fresh cranberry--they're tart!

Directions

Remove the zest from the two oranges using a zester or a small knife. Place the zest, sugar, and 3/4 cup of water into a saucepan. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Add cranberries and continue to cook until the cranberries start to pop, about 2 minutes. Transfer entire mixture to the bowl of a food processor. Add the oranges and spices to the mixture. Process until mixture is combined. Transfer to a plastic or glass container and refrigerate, covered, for 12 hours. A serving is 2 tablespoons.

Number of Servings: 18
2 Tablespoons 43 calories 0 g fat



Chef Meg's Herb Roasted Turkey

Ingredients

12 lb. turkey
1 orange
2 T olive oil
1 T rosemary
1 t thyme
1 t sage
1/2 t black pepper

For perfect results try using a V-rack in your roasting pan or roast the turkey on a bed of vegetables. Once the fat from the turkey melts, it falls to the bottom of the roasting pan. When that happens, the bottom quarter of the bird does not roast--it braises in its own juices. The vegetables or V-rack prevents this from happening. NOTE: The vegetables cooked in this way have more fat and calories (amount will vary) than Chef Meg's Roasted Root Vegetables.

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Remove the giblets and neck if they are encased within the turkey. Rinse and pat the turkey dry. Slice the orange in half and stuff inside the bird. In a small bowl, combine oil and seasonings. Rub the seasonings under the skin and on top of the breast of the turkey. Rub any remaining seasonings over the entire turkey. If the legs are not secured with a wire, tie them together with kitchen string. Place the turkey on a V-rack in a roasting pan, tucking the legs under the bird.

Roast at 400 degrees for 30 minutes; reduce oven temperature to 325 degrees and continue cooking the turkey until an internal temperature of 165 degrees is reached for the breast or 180 for the leg. Also look for other indications of doneness: loose joints and juices running clear. If turkey begins to turn dark brown before the internal temperature is met, cover the breast with foil and continue to roast. If you do not have a V-rack you can create one by placing chopped carrots, celery, and onion (about 1/2 cup each), under the turkey.

Makes 15 (4 ounce) servings;
various amounts of light and dark meat
(Nutrition info is calculated on a mix of light and dark meat)

3 ounces light meat	140 calories	3 g fat
3 ounces dark meat	160 calories	7 g fat



Chef Meg's Apple Cider Gravy

Ingredients

1/2 c turkey juices (leftover from roasting and fat removed)
4 c chicken stock (homemade or low sodium)
1 1/4 c apple cider
pinch salt
pinch black pepper
1 t dried thyme
3 T all-purpose flour

Gravy gets a bad rap, but this tasty sauce can be made with almost no fat. The trick is to skim the fat from your pan juices (either put it in the fridge or use cheesecloth to soak up the fat). Depending on their size, turkeys will yield varying amounts of juices. From a 12-pound roasted turkey, you can expect about 1/2 cup defatted jus (juice).

Directions

Remove turkey from roasting pan. In a small cup, combine the flour and 1/2 cup of the stock; set aside. Skim any visible fat from roasting pan with cheesecloth. Place the roasting pan on the stove and turn the burner to medium heat. (Remember there might be fat remaining in the pan or on the outside, so don't let the heat get too hot--it will burst into flames!) Vigorously scrape the bottom of the pan with a long-handled spoon to deglaze it, and add the apple cider. Bring to a boil and reduce the liquid by half--it should take about 5 minutes at medium heat. Slowly add the remaining 3 1/2 c stock; whisk it into the cider mixture. Allow to simmer for 6 minutes. Whisk in the flour and stock mixture; bring gravy to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. The gravy will start to thicken. Add salt, pepper, and thyme. Simmer for 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat and strain.

Serving size is 2 tablespoons; this makes
about 16 servings--plenty for leftovers.
20 calories

0 g fat (will vary slightly based on your turkey)



Chef Meg's Roasted Squash Soup

Ingredients

Soup

1 T olive oil
1 c onions, chopped fine
1 large butternut squash,
approx. 3 lbs
4 c low sodium chicken stock
1 orange
1/2 c orange juice

Garnish

1/2 bunch cilantro, fresh, leaf only
1/4 c unsweetened coconut, flake
1 orange (zest, juice, and fruit)
1 serrano chili pepper

Directions

Studies have shown that starting a meal with a broth-based soup will lead you to eat fewer calories over the course of a meal. Try a two for one: The next time you are turning on the oven to 375 degrees, roast the squash, cool it slightly, peel and package to freeze. On Thanksgiving Day, you won't have to worry about finding time and precious space in your oven for the squash. This soup gets a boost of flavor from cilantro pesto, but there's very little fat in this version.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Peel, halve, and remove the seeds from the squash. Dice into 3/4 inch cubes. Spray a roasting pan with nonstick cookin spray, add cubed squash, and spray the top of the squash. Roast 20-25 minutes or until squash is tender. Remove from oven. Place oil in a dutch oven or medium size saucepan. Sauté the onion in the oil over moderately low heat, stirring, until it is softened. Add the squash and stock; cook the mixture, covered, over moderately low heat for 10 minutes. Add the orange zest and the juice; simmer the mixture, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Using a blender or food processor, purée the mixture in batches. (For a smoother texture, strain the soup through a sieve, but you'll remove some of the fiber.) In a blender or food processor, blend the coconut, hot pepper, cilantro, orange juice and flesh until mixture forms a puree. If mixture is too thick, add warm water to thin it. Ladle the soup into soup cups and garnish each serving with about a teaspoon of the pesto.

Makes 8 one cup servings.

Number of Servings: 8

This recipe costs about 80 cents a serving

1 cup 128 calories 3 g fat



Chef Meg's Mini Apple Tarts

Ingredients

24 phyllo dough tart shells
4 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and diced
1 lemon, juiced
2 T butter, unsalted
4 T brown sugar
1/2 c caramel ice cream topping
1/2 c whipped cream (optional--nutrition info NOT included)

Instead of a whole pie, try making bite-size tarts. The diminutive desserts cook quicker and are automatically portion controlled. Plus, they're easier to make for a crowd, and there's no need for a fork and plate.

This recipe only costs about \$3.50 to make--but you save money by buying sheets of phyllo dough and making your own tart shells (see directions for more information).

Directions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Place tart shells on a baking tray. Combine lemon juice and apples in a mixing bowl. In a cast iron or heavy skillet, heat the butter until frothy. Add brown sugar and cook until dark in color; about 1-2 minutes. Add apples and toss. Transfer apples to the tart shells. Bake 6-7 minutes. Allow to cool slightly; top with sauce and whipped cream (optional--nutrition info NOT included).

To make your own tart shells: Spray 24 mini muffin cups with nonstick cooking spray. Remove phyllo dough from packaging. Slice into 1 inch strips then cut each strip into 2 inch segments. Using 3 layers at a time, fill the cups, spraying cooking spray between each layer. Repeat process three times.

Serving Size: two filled shells with 1 teaspoon caramel sauce.