

Creating a Thanksgiving Feast on a Budget

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Maybe you've always wanted to host Thanksgiving, but were concerned about the cost of feeding the largest meal of the year to a small army. The holidays and excess seem to go hand in hand. ***The economy still isn't great, but fortunately, a great Thanksgiving meal can be created with a limited budget.***

Implement these suggestions to create a wonderful, affordable Thanksgiving dinner:

- 1. Get started early.** According to the experts, the turkey is almost half of the cost of the typical Thanksgiving meal. A frozen turkey can be purchased a month or so ahead of time. ***Avoid waiting until close to the holidays to shop for your turkey because the prices go up and demand increases.*** Shop around for a good deal and you'll be way ahead of the game.
- 2. Purchase items in bulk.** If you're feeding a large group, it can be worthwhile to purchase items in larger quantities. Many of the larger stores have an aisle with bulk items. Of course, there's also Costco, Sam's Club, and similar stores that specialize in bulk quantities.
- 3. Utilize coupons.** Grocery stores are fighting for your dollars this time of year. It can be worth the time it takes to cut out and use the coupons. Start looking a month before the big day.
 - ***Even if you don't typically use coupons, it might be worthwhile around Thanksgiving.***

4. **Skip the appetizers.** Most appetizers are expensive, and the result is a lot of leftovers. Everyone will be well fed soon enough. Let everyone focus on the main meal. Appetizers are intended to make up for a smaller main course.
5. **Consider what items are in season.** Brussels sprouts are abundantly available in November, while asparagus is not. Be on the lookout for items that are harvested late in the year.
6. **Be reasonable.** Most Thanksgiving meals have excessive leftovers. Try to make a realistic prediction of how much food you'll actually need.
 - ***There are calculators online that can help you make an accurate estimation of your food requirements, depending on how many you're feeding at Thanksgiving dinner.***
7. **Do it yourself.** Dinner rolls are quite inexpensive in the store, but you can probably save even more money if you just do it yourself. Some items, such as pecan pie, can be expensive to purchase, but cheaper to make.
8. **Stick with the basics.** Many amateur chefs make the mistake of trying out new dishes that require special skills, expensive ingredients, or both. These dishes rarely turn out well, and the food may go to waste. There's a reason why the classics became classics. Nearly everyone enjoys eating them and the costs are minimal.
 - Even Martha Stewart suggests a menu of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, cranberry sauce, seasonal vegetables, and pumpkin pie. That's simple and inexpensive.
9. **Encourage all guests to bring a side dish. *Take care of the turkey and let everyone else prepare and bring the other dishes.*** Assign responsibilities for the core items and take the time and cost burdens off your shoulders. Someone is sure to bring something unique and interesting.

10. **Use the leftovers to your advantage.** If you have overnight guests, they will need to be fed the following day. Push that leftover turkey on them! Who doesn't like a turkey sandwich? You already have the food, so put it to good use.

Thanksgiving is a time to create and share memories with your loved ones. It's not necessary to spend a lot of money to accomplish that. ***Start planning early and stick to the classic dishes that everyone seems to enjoy at Thanksgiving dinner.*** You can host a memorable Thanksgiving and keep your budget intact.