

COUNTDOWN TO STRESS-FREE HOLIDAYS

THANKSGIVING PLANNER

This Thanksgiving Planner is inserted into Holiday Timeline. If you are not hosting Thanksgiving, you can skip it or adapt it to some other Holiday meal you are hosting

One Month before Thanksgiving

Finalize Guest List

Plan Your Menu

3 weeks before Thanksgiving

Get any cooking or serving dishes or utensils you need

Create a shopping List

Shop for Drinks

Order/Reserve a Turkey

2 two Weeks before Thanksgiving

Clean Out Your Freezer

Make and Freeze Pie dough (or entire apple pie)

Make & freeze homemade soup stock

Freeze Rolls

Decide on décor

One week before Thanksgiving

Shop for Non-perishables

Freeze Soup

Prepare a cooking Schedule

Pick up your Turkey

Create a seating plan

Plan ahead for leftovers

3 days before Thanksgiving

Defrost your Turkey

Buy perishable ingredients

2 Days before Thanksgiving

Make Cranberry sauce, pie crusts, & pies

1 Day before Thanksgiving

Prepare reheatable side dishes

Prep garnishes

Bake Pies

Make a schedule of cooking times for tomorrow

Thanksgiving day

Don't stress – Stick to the plan

Day After Thanksgiving

Use or freeze leftovers

Six Weeks before Holiday – (If Holiday is Christmas: beginning of November)

- Make a master gift list.

You may not have every detail filled in, but at least make sure you list everyone you'll need to buy for, and think about what they'd like. That way you can pick up things as you see them, rather than running to the mall at the last minute. Have your children give you their wish lists.

- Make a budget.

Set a budget for yourself so you don't end up going overboard. Even if this number is just an estimate, it will help you stay within boundaries and still have some money left for those unexpected holiday gifts.

- Start shopping in earnest.

Yes, you may already be picking things up here and there, but the more you buy ahead, the better—especially if you'll be mailing gifts. If you have big-ticket items (like electronics) that go on sale the day after Thanksgiving, you may want to brave the crowds on Black Friday—you could save substantially.

Extraneous gifts: Stock up on a few items that would make just about anyone happy. You never know when you'll get that last minute invite or an unexpected guest. Locally made jars of jam are a sweet treat for everyone!

One Month before Christmas (Directly After Thanksgiving)

- Do any online shopping.

Order gifts now so you have lots of time to wrap them once they arrive.

- Wrap gifts as you buy them.

Not only will this keep little eyes from finding out what Santa is bringing, it will save you time on Christmas Eve.

- Take stock of your decorations.

Get out your lights, ornaments, wreaths, and lawn ornaments. See if anything is broken and needs to be replaced.

- Take stock of dishes and glasses.

Make sure you have the serving platters and wineglasses you'll need for parties or special meals, in time to buy more, if necessary.

- Start addressing holiday cards.

It can take a while, depending on how long your list is.

Put gratuities in their own personal cards. You can order a box of blank cards to keep around just in case something like this pops up.

Three Weeks before Christmas (First Week of December)

- Buy Stamps & Mail cards.

Try to do a few cards every day. If you're too busy to get them addressed and mailed during the first week of December, consider putting them off until after the holiday rush. People generally enjoy getting a card a few days late, when things have slowed down and they actually notice the mail.

- Buy a live tree.

This is a good time to get your tree, if you want it to stay fresh and retain its needles through Christmas. Same goes for fresh greenery or garlands.

Consider a smaller living tree. A full-sized tree may seem brilliant, but don't underestimate the little ones. Small potted evergreen trees add the perfect delightful touch to those smaller spaces. Rotate the trees through the month so that they get plenty of light. When the holidays have passed, you can plan them outdoors.

- Decorate!

You may be one who decks the halls as soon as the Thanksgiving turkey carcass has been tossed. That's fine, too, but by the first week of December, it's time to get the house looking festive.

- Finalize menus.

If you're serving the holiday meal (or any large holiday get together) now is the time to start planning. Know what you'll be cooking and what others will be contributing. Make a Master Grocery List. See Thanksgiving countdown.

- Order a turkey or ham. Or whatever else is the center peice of your holiday meal—you don't want to get caught short.

DO NOT FORGET TO SCHEDULE SOME STRESS-REDUCING "ME" TIME

Two Weeks before Christmas (2nd week of December)

- Mail the gifts. If possible, you should try to **mail all of your gifts by Dec. 10th**.
- Wrap the gifts that are not being mailed.

Round-up wrapping paper, tape and gift tags For the gifts that will be sticking around your home for the holidays, it's time to get the wrapping out of the way. You can wrap the boxes, but add ribbons, bows, and tags later. Use sticky notes to tag the gifts so you won't forget who gets what. Boxes without all the frills on them are easily stackable.

Stock up on stocking stuffers and other small gifts.

- Non-perishables.

Buy all the alcohol as well as the pantry and baking staples you'll need.

One week before Christmas

- Start to Clean.

All that hard work you've put into decorating your home will have a much bigger effect if the floors are clean. Take some time to tidy up and don't forget to clear out your refrigerator. Get rid of old leftovers and make space for all the food & beverages that your guests will be bringing.

- Chill the booze (or the Martinellis)

You never know when that spontaneous holiday get together will commence. Keep a couple bottles of Champagne chilled and ready to rumble.

December 21: It's almost the **last day for sending first-class mail**, so be sure to post any final cards.

3 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

- Last minute grocery shopping.

Get all the perishables, veggies and fruit that you'll need. Consult that master grocery list you made the first week of December.

- Pre-set the table.

If you're planning on serving a large holiday party, go ahead and set the table now. This way you're not rushing around the dining table while your potatoes are boiling over. Make it even easier on the big day by putting a sticky note on each platter that states what dish you plan to serve on it. (That also allows people to help you without asking 12 times.)

2 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

- Meal Prep:

You've already stocked up the freezer with a few things here and there, but now is the time to prepare the main courses that can sit out for a couple days.

- Buy fresh flowers.

Whether they are for a party or a family meal, fresh flowers should always be purchased two days in advance. Blooms have time to open up, and they'll still be lush and fragrant.

December 24, THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS

- Be Santa's Little Helper. Assemble the toys that will be surprises from Santa, and finish last minute wrapping
- Recharge the batteries on your camera or video recorder.

You don't want to miss the reaction on a little one's face because the battery ran out during the school pageant the week before.

- Make a schedule of cooking times for tomorrow. Figure out when you plan to eat and count backwards so you'll know when you need to place the turkey (or what-have-you) in the oven. Use this also as a guideline to plan out when to cook what since you're likely limited to one stove. Plan accordingly.

It's the holidays!! Take a second to breathe and relish the time spent with your family. Set out the cookies and milk for Santa, then light a fire. **Don't have a fireplace? Tune into a yule-log TV channel!**

**** Lists come from Real Simple and Organized Home ****

<https://www.realsimple.com/holidays-entertaining/holidays/christmas/ultimate-christmas-countdown-checklist>

<http://christmas.organizedhome.com/christmas-countdown/print-christmas-countdown-planner>