

Move Over Turkey

Sides Dishes Become Stars for the Day at the Thanksgiving Feast

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Ah, Thanksgiving. Americans of all religions, ethnicities, races and political affiliations participate in this non-sectarian holiday. It is a day for all of us to celebrate being part of America and to be grateful for our great land. It is a day off from work and school that does not require synagogue attendance, yet it is still spiritual in nature.

Now, since more than six weeks have passed since the flurry of Jewish holidays, we've had some perspective and enough time to recuperate. With Thanksgiving we again have the opportunity to catch up with family and old friends that we haven't seen since last year and connect across the generations and to enjoy food.

All those delicious traditional Thanksgiving dishes remind us of the plenty that fills our lives. The new dishes still to discover take advantage of the late autumn produce and confirms the bounty with which we are provided.

At the sumptuous meal, the turkey is a given. We love the big, succulent bird that delights at the dinner table and keeps us in sandwiches for days after the designated Thursday. There are myriad ways to prepare the turkey. But what makes the dinner a true feast—and most exciting—are the side dishes. Some cooks hold to their tried and true repertoire. Others may like to experiment a bit and put a twist on tradition.

For a bit of a twist, try Creamy Butternut Squash, a seasonal delight and amalgam of contradictions. It is savory-sweet in flavor and tastes exotic, yet is also familiar. The coconut milk makes it creamy but keeps it dairy-free—perfect for a kosher Thanksgiving table.

For another spin on the usual vegetable fare, try Brussels Sprout Slaw. This fresh, crunchy, green vegetable dish offers a welcome texture and flavor amidst a meal that is usually baked, stewed, or sautéed. Brussels sprouts are in their prime at Thanksgiving time. Sprinkled with toasted pecans and dried cranberries and tossed in a light maple vinaigrette, it's a crunchy and refreshing salad for the meal.

For good measure—and for the traditionalists—we've included recipes for Classic Bread Stuffing and Cranberry Stuffing.

Indeed. There is much to be thankful for.

Cranberry Chutney

- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup granulated sugar
- 2 cups fresh whole cranberries
- 2 peeled and cored and diced apples
- ¾ cup apple cider vinegar
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves

1. In medium saucepan mix water and sugar together over medium high heat and bring to boil.
2. Add fresh cranberries, apples, vinegar, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mix well and bring to a boil. Cover and let simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Serve at room temperature.

Classic Bread Stuffing

- 10-12 cups country-style bread, cut into bite-sized cubes
- 3 medium onions, chopped
- 3 celery ribs, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1 stick margarine
- 1½ cups chicken or vegetable broth

1. Preheat oven to 325F. Toast bread cubes in a large baking pan until just dry (about 25 minutes).

2. In the meanwhile, cook onions, celery, and herbs in a large skillet over medium heat, stirring every so often until the vegetables are tender, about 10 minutes.

3. Stir together bread cubes, vegetables, and broth and add salt and pepper to taste. Cool Completely.

Brussels Sprout Slaw

- 2 pounds brussels sprouts, trimmed
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- ¼ cup stoneground mustard
- 1/8 cup apple cider vinegar (or more if you prefer it tarter)
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- Salt and Pepper

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to boil. Add brussels sprouts. Cook until bright green and crisp-tender about 7 minutes.

2. Drain and rinse Brussels sprouts, and in batches coarsely chop in food processor. Set aside chopped Brussels sprouts in a large bowl.

3. In a jar or cruet mix together maple syrup, mustard, cider vinegar, and oil. Add salt and pepper to taste.

4. Before serving mix pecans and cranberries into brussels sprout slaw. Toss with maple vinaigrette.

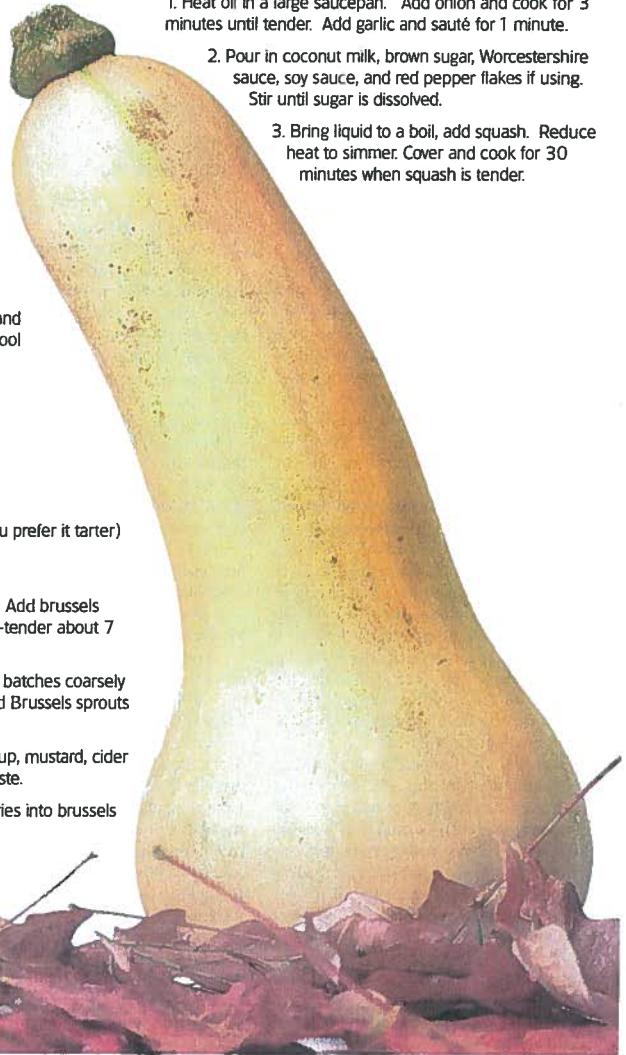
Creamy Butternut Squash

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes, optional
- 1 2-pound butternut squash, peeled and cut into cubes

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan. Add onion and cook for 3 minutes until tender. Add garlic and sauté for 1 minute.

2. Pour in coconut milk, brown sugar, Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, and red pepper flakes if using. Stir until sugar is dissolved.

3. Bring liquid to a boil, add squash. Reduce heat to simmer. Cover and cook for 30 minutes when squash is tender.



Rachel Harkham is a Rockland County mother of three who has a cooking blog and runs a small chocolate business.