

HAVE A HEALTHY, HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Healthy Recipes & Cooking tips for Christmas



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CHRISTMAS SHOPPING TIPS

We tend to think of Christmas as a time to spend, but buying more food than you really need is expensive and often leads to overeating or waste. Planning what you buy will help your money go further and can make your Christmas healthier, too.



Here are some tips:

- Plan your meals over Christmas and then make a shopping list – and keep to it
- Avoid ‘special offers’ – except for things on your list
- Only buy what you need – the shops are only shut for two days
- Don’t buy too big a turkey – you may be fed up with it before it is eaten up
- Freeze leftovers – you can use them up during January which will save you money
- Look for loose vegetables – and just buy what you need
- Look for good value fresh fruit. Supermarket special offers may be useful here!
- Canned fruit – especially canned fruit in juice – makes a convenient alternative to fresh fruit and can be used to make healthy puddings
- Biscuits, chocolates and crisps are expensive. They contain a lot of fat, sugar and salt. How many of these do you really need?
- Bake a cake or some biscuits instead of buying them
- Alcohol is high in calories. If you buy less alcohol you will save money.

FOOD SAFETY AT CHRISTMAS

The last thing you and your family want for Christmas is food poisoning. You may think that food poisoning is something you get when eating out, but you can also get it at home.

It all starts with the hands!



Hands are used for all sorts of things – from petting the dog and washing windows to weeding the garden. It's amazing what our hands touch during the day and so it is easy for bacteria to pass from your hands to your food. So...

ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE PREPARING OR EATING FOOD

Also wash them after...

- Handling raw meat and poultry
- Going to the toilet
- Touching pets or farm animals
- Cleaning out the cat litter
- Changing baby's nappy
- Putting rubbish in the bin
- Washing the car
- Doing housework
- Handling coins

Good hand washing is the first line of defence in preventing food poisoning, so wash your hands and teach your children to do so too.

FOOD SAFETY AND YOUR TURKEY

Poultry, like chicken, turkey, duck or goose, can carry food poisoning bacteria. These will be destroyed during cooking but there is plenty of opportunity to transfer the bacteria during preparation.



Storage

1. If you are using a fresh turkey, place it on a deep plate or dish to catch any juices and keep it covered.
2. Store the turkey on the bottom shelf of the fridge until ready to start cooking.

Defrosting

1. If you are using a frozen turkey, make sure it is completely defrosted before you start to roast it.
2. The safest way to defrost your turkey is on the bottom shelf of the fridge, on a plate or a tray. Do not thaw the turkey in cold water.
3. It will take at least 24 hours to defrost every 2-2.5 kgs of turkey. Make sure you check the weight on the label and give yourself enough time. It can take up to three days to defrost a frozen 7.5 kg turkey!
4. You'll know the turkey is completely thawed when the body is soft, the legs can be moved, and there are no ice crystals in the cavity.

Handling

1. Do not wash your turkey because bacteria may be splashed over the work surfaces of your kitchen or to other foods.
2. After you have prepared the turkey, clean the work surfaces thoroughly using detergent and warm water.

Cooking times

Use the tables on the next page to check the correct cooking time for your turkey.

CHRISTMAS TURKEY COOKING TIMES



Cooking times for a pre-heated, electric fan assisted oven at 180°C.

Weight unstuffed turkey (kg)	Cooking time unstuffed	Cooking time stuffed
4	3 hrs 20 mins	3 hrs 51 mins
4.5	3 hrs 30 mins	4 hrs 6 mins
5	3 hrs 39 mins	4 hrs 21 mins
5.5	3 hrs 49 mins	4 hrs 37 mins
6	3 hrs 58 mins	4 hrs 52 mins
6.5	4 hrs 8 mins	5 hrs 7 mins
7	4 hrs 17 mins	5 hrs 23 mins
7.5	4 hrs 27 mins	5 hrs 38 mins
8	4 hrs 36 mins	5 hrs 53 mins
8.5	4 hrs 46 mins	6 hrs 8 mins
9	4 hrs 55 mins	6 hrs 24 mins
9.5	5 hrs 5 mins	6 hrs 39 mins
10	5 hrs 14 mins	6 hrs 54 mins



Cooking times for unstuffed turkeys in conventional and gas ovens (Pre-heated oven to 180°C / 350°F / gas mark 4)

Weight unstuffed turkey (kg)	Cooking time unstuffed
3.5-5.5	3 hrs - 4 hrs 20 mins
5.5-6.5	4 hrs 20 mins - 5 hrs
6.5-8	5 hrs - 6 hrs 20 mins
8-9	6 hrs 20 mins - 7 hrs
9-11	7 hrs - 8 hrs 20 mins

Important note about stuffing

If you have an electric fan-assisted oven you can safely stuff the body cavity of the turkey. The stuffing should weigh no more than 10% of the weight of the bird and be loosely packed in the body cavity.

If you have any other type of oven, we recommend that you cook your stuffing in a separate oven-proof dish.

HOW TO COOK YOUR CHRISTMAS TURKEY

It's hard to beat a traditional roast turkey at Christmas and it is not as difficult to prepare as you might think. Follow these steps for a perfect Christmas dinner.

Ingredients

Turkey
Homemade stuffing

Equipment

Large roasting tin
Aluminium foil



How to calculate the cooking time for your turkey

Check the cooking times for electric fan-assisted, conventional and gas ovens on page 5.

Method

1. Make sure frozen turkeys are completely defrosted before roasting.
2. Remember to handle your turkey as little as possible. Wash your hands thoroughly and any surfaces that come in contact with raw turkey.
3. Remove the giblets and keep them for making gravy (see the recipe on page 12).
4. Heat the oven to 180°C, 375°F, gas mark 5.
5. Place the turkey breast up on a roasting tray.
6. Cover the whole turkey loosely with tin foil and place in the hot oven.
7. Baste the turkey every hour.
8. About half way through the cooking, remove from the oven, lift off the foil and spoon the juices into a clean bowl. Put the turkey back in the oven to continue roasting.
9. About half an hour before the end of the cooking time, remove the aluminium foil to allow the turkey skin to brown and become crisp. If the skin is already brown, keep the foil on the turkey to keep it moist.

Always cook a turkey thoroughly to make sure food poisoning bacteria will be killed.

Safety-testing your turkey

1. Before serving, make sure your turkey is piping hot all the way through with no pink meat left.
2. Pierce the thickest part of the thigh and breast with a clean fork or skewer. The juices should run clear.
3. If your turkey is stuffed, the centre of the stuffing should be piping hot. This is the slowest part of a stuffed bird to cook.

For the tastiest and juiciest turkey, cover the bird with foil and leave for half an hour before carving.



BOILED HAM

Boiled hams usually come wrapped in plastic, which should be removed before cooking. The cooking instructions however, are written on the labelling, so keep the wrapper or write the instructions down before you start cooking.

A 1 kg ham will give plenty of meat for 6 people at Christmas dinner and the cold ham will make nice sandwiches.



To boil the ham

1. Allow 20 minutes cooking time per 450 g (1 lb).
2. Remove the outer wrapping and place the ham in a saucepan.
3. Cover with cold water, place the lid on top and bring to the boil.
4. Boil for the length of time indicated on the cooking instructions.
5. At the end of the cooking time, turn the heat off and leave the ham sitting in the hot water for about 10 minutes – this will make it easier to carve.
6. Drain off the water and place the ham on a large plate to carve it.

Glazed ham

1. After boiling the ham, cool it slightly and remove the rind.
2. Place the ham on a roasting tin, cover with foil and roast for ½ hour at 160°C, 325°F, gas mark 3.
3. Remove ham and coat with honey and wholegrain mustard and roast uncovered at 140°C, 275°F, gas mark 1 for a further 15 minutes, until golden brown.

CRUNCHY ROAST POTATOES

Ingredients (Serves 4)

3 large potatoes
Vegetable cooking oil

Equipment

Potato peeler
Saucepan
Kettle
Roasting tin



Method

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (400°F, gas mark 6)
2. Peel the potatoes, cut them into quarters and place in a saucepan.
3. Boil water in the kettle and cover the potatoes with boiling water or place in a steamer over boiling water.
4. Place 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil in the roasting tin and set it in the hot oven to heat.
5. Bring the potatoes to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes.
6. Remove the saucepan from the heat, drain off the water into a bowl and then set the potatoes back on the hob.
7. Holding the lid firmly on the saucepan, shake the saucepan up and down so that the potatoes move around and their outsides get a bit bashed.
8. Lift the roasting tin with the hot oil out of the oven and set on top of the cooker.
9. Add the bashed potatoes one by one to the hot oil (**TAKE CARE**) and brush or spoon the oil over the surface of the potatoes.
10. Place the potatoes back in the oven and cook for 15 minutes. Turn the potatoes over and then cook for a further 15 minutes.
11. Test with a skewer to make sure the potatoes are cooked – they should be crunchy on the outside and soft inside.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH BACON

Ingredients (Serves 4)

400g Brussels sprouts
2 rashers lean bacon
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 clove garlic
A little boiling water

Equipment

Sharp knife	Saucepan
Chopping boards	Kettle
Garlic crusher	Wooden spoon
Tablespoon	

Method

1. Trim the ends of the sprouts and remove outer leaves.
2. Remove fat from bacon and chop roughly.
3. Crush garlic clove or chop it finely.
4. Heat vegetable oil in a saucepan, add garlic and bacon bits and cook until bacon is golden brown. Do not allow garlic to burn.
5. Add Brussels sprouts and stir.
6. Add a little water and cook sprouts lightly – they should still be a bit ‘crunchy’ when eaten.



CARROT AND PARSNIP STICKS

Ingredients (Serves 4)

2 large carrots
1 large parsnip

Equipment

Potato peeler	Steamer or saucepan
Chopping board	Kettle

Method

1. Peel carrots and parsnips and cut into sticks.
2. Cook the sticks in a saucepan or steamer so that they are still crunchy.

SAGE AND ONION STUFFING

Ingredients

4 slices bread
1 onion
2 tablespoons fresh chopped sage
or 4 teaspoons dried sage
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Equipment

Chopping board
Sharp knife
Grater
Cup
Fork
Tablespoon
Saucepan

Method

1. Make breadcrumbs by rubbing the bread slices against the grater.
2. Chop the onion finely.
3. Heat the oil in the saucepan and add the chopped onion.
4. Cook gently so that the onion softens but doesn't go brown. Remove from the heat.
5. Add the breadcrumbs and sage. Add a little salt and ground black pepper if liked.
6. Stuff the turkey before roasting or press gently into an ovenproof dish and cook separately for 15 –20 minutes just before the turkey is ready. See page 5 for advice about stuffing the turkey.



GRAVY

To make delicious gravy, use turkey juices and giblet stock. You can also save any water from cooking the vegetables and add this to the gravy too.



To make gravy

You can make gravy using gravy powder or granules. Follow the instructions on the packet, but add giblet stock, juices from the turkey and/or water from cooking the vegetables in place of water.

Method when using turkey juices

1. Half way through cooking the turkey, spoon off the juices into a clean bowl.
2. Cool the juices and then place the bowl in the fridge to let the fat on the top harden.
3. Remove the fat and discard it, keeping the juices for the gravy.

Method when using giblet stock

1. Place the giblets in a saucepan, cover them with cold water and then bring to the boil on the hob.
2. Turn down heat and simmer for about an hour – check regularly to make sure it doesn't dry up. Drain off the liquid into a clean bowl.
3. Allow the giblet stock to cool and then store in the fridge until you are ready to make the gravy.

You can eat the giblets - though they also make a tasty treat for your cat or dog!

DESSERTS

Tired of Christmas pudding and trifle? Here is an easy alternative that tastes good and is healthy.



SPICY PEACHES WITH TOASTED ALMONDS AND HONEYED YOGHURT

Ingredients

1 can peach halves (in juice)
1 teaspoon mixed spice
1 dessertspoon Demerara sugar
300ml low fat natural yoghurt
1 dessertspoon runny honey
1 tablespoon sliced almonds

Equipment

Can opener
Clean bowls
Teaspoon
Dessertspoon
Tablespoon
Ovenproof dish
Baking tray

Method

1. Heat oven to 180°C, 350°F, gas mark 4.
2. Open can of peaches and drain off juice into a bowl.
3. Place the peach halves, cut side up in an ovenproof dish.
4. Pour half the juice over the peach halves.
5. Mix together the mixed spice and Demerara sugar and sprinkle over the peaches.
6. Place peaches in the oven for 10 – 15 minutes.
7. Put yoghurt in a bowl and add the runny honey. Mix together well.
8. Spread the sliced almonds over a baking tray and cook under a hot grill until golden brown – this only takes a short time so watch carefully.
9. Remove the peaches from the oven when the sugar has melted and the juice is bubbling.
10. Serve hot with a large spoonful of yoghurt and sprinkled with toasted sliced almonds.

FRESH FRUIT SALAD

Fruit salad is delicious at any time of the year but make it a special one at Christmas by using more exotic fruits.

Ingredients (Serves 6)

1 red or green apple
2 tangerines or small oranges
12 black or green grapes
1 banana
2 kiwi fruit
1 large thick slice of pineapple (fresh or canned)
Fresh fruit juice
(grape, pineapple, apple or orange)

Equipment

Sharp knives
Chopping board
Large bowl
Large spoon

Method

1. Wash apple and then cut into quarters removing the core. Cut into chunks.
2. Peel and divide the tangerines or oranges into segments.
3. Wash grapes.
4. Peel banana and kiwi fruit and cut into slices.
5. Cut pineapple into chunks.
6. Place all fruit in the bowl, add the fruit juice and mix well.
7. Serve on its own or with a scoop of ice cream.

This fruit salad keeps well overnight if covered and placed in the fridge.



YULETIDE ICED MUFFINS

These muffins are ideal as a lighter alternative to Christmas cake. They cost less, and are quicker to make. They can be wrapped up when cool and frozen for 1 month.

Ingredients (Makes 12 muffins)

225g/9oz of self raising flour
100g/4oz caster sugar
2 large eggs
80ml milk
80ml oil
1tsp vanilla extract
3 tablespoons dried mixed fruit (sultanas, raisins, cranberries etc)
Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon
Juice of ½ lemon and ½ orange
1 teaspoon mixed spice

For the Icing

3 tablespoons icing sugar
1 tablespoon of orange or lemon juice
2 tablespoons of chopped mixed nuts

Equipment

12 hole muffin tin
Paper muffin cases
Mixing bowls

Tablespoon & Fork
Grater
Cooling rack
Measuring jug

Method

Start preparing the fruit at least 2 hours before making the muffin mixture.

1. Remove the zest from the lemon and orange using the small side of a grater.
2. Place the dried fruit in a small bowl and add the orange and lemon zest.
3. Cut the orange in two and squeeze the juice from one half. Do the same with the lemon.
4. Pour the squeezed orange and lemon juice over the dried fruit and mix. Leave to stand for at least two hours or even overnight, to allow the fruit to soak up the juice and soften.

Muffins

5. Line 12 muffin tins with paper cups. Preheat oven to 180°C /gas mark 5.
6. Sieve the flour into a bowl and stir in sugar and mixed spice.
7. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs, milk, oil and vanilla extract lightly.
8. Pour milk and egg mixture into the flour and sugar. Add the soaked fruit and stir the mixture lightly to form a smooth batter consistency.
9. Spoon mixture into the muffin cases and bake for 20-25 minutes.
10. When baked cool on a cooling rack.

Icing

11. Sieve the icing sugar and add the orange or lemon juice, mixing well to make a smooth thick icing. (Add some more icing sugar if it too runny or some extra juice if it is too stiff.)
12. Spoon over the muffins and sprinkle with nuts

SPICY CHRISTMAS BISCUITS

Homemade biscuits smell and taste wonderful and are better value than bought biscuits. Spoil yourself and your family this Christmas with this recipe. If you don't like spices in your biscuits, leave them out.

Ingredients (Makes about 16)

225g (8 oz) plain flour
175g (6oz) margarine
1 teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon grated nutmeg
60g (2 oz) castor sugar
A little extra castor sugar for dusting

Equipment

Large bowl
Sieve
Teaspoon
Wooden spoon
Cookie cutters
Baking tray

Method

1. Heat oven to 180°C, 350°F, gas mark 4.
2. Weigh out flour and sieve on to a plate.
3. Weigh out margarine and sugar and place in a large mixing bowl.
4. Add cinnamon and nutmeg and beat together till smooth and creamy.
5. Add sieved flour, one tablespoon at a time and mix until all the flour is incorporated. Use your hands to get the dough to come together into a ball.
6. Place the ball of dough on a floured worktop and flatten slightly. Roll out to about 1 cm (½ inch) thick.
7. Cut shapes with cookie cutters – this is especially nice if you can find star or holly shaped cutters. If you don't have cookie cutters, just use the top of a cup or a mug.
8. Place the cookies on a greased baking tray and bake for 10 – 15 minutes until a very pale golden.
9. Remove from baking tray on to a cooling rack and sprinkle with a little more castor sugar. Cool completely and store in an airtight tin.



USING LEFTOVERS

A frequent problem after Christmas is what to do with all the turkey that hasn't been eaten.

As with any food you cook and don't eat straight away, it is important that your Christmas leftovers are stored and handled safely.

Food safety tips

- Cool your leftovers as quickly as possible
- Put them in the fridge within 2 hours of cooking
- Leftovers should be eaten within 3 days
- Always reheat leftovers until they are piping hot all the way through
- Never reheat food more than once.

Here are some suggestions for ways of using up your leftovers

- Use meat for sandwiches, curries, pasta dishes and pies
- Strip the meat from the bones and freeze in small bags and then use it for other dishes
- Make turkey stock from the bones and skin of the turkey and use for making soup. This can then be frozen.

TURKEY STOCK

Ingredients

Bones and skin from turkey
Left over ham – bone, meat, skin
Left over vegetables
2 - 2½ litres cold water

Equipment

Large saucepan
Sieve or colander

Method

1. Place the leftover turkey bones, bits of ham and vegetables in a large saucepan and cover with the cold water.
2. Bring to the boil and simmer for 2-3 hours - do not allow liquid to dry up.
3. Remove the saucepan from the heat and drain off liquid through a sieve or colander into a large bowl.
4. Allow to cool and then place stock in fridge so that fat sets on the top.
5. Scrape off the fat and discard. The stock is now ready to either freeze or use in soup (try **Christmas Broth** recipe on page 18).



CHRISTMAS BROTH

Turkey stock gives this soup a delicious flavour.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon cooking oil
Ground black pepper
2 onions
A little salt if liked
1 teaspoon dried coriander
1 cup cooked turkey
3 large carrots
½ medium turnip
2 large parsnips
2 medium potatoes
½ litres turkey stock
½ cup red or green lentils
1 leek

Equipment

Wooden spoon
Large saucepan
Tablespoon and teaspoon
Sharp knife
Chopping board

Method

1. Heat oil gently in a large saucepan.
2. Peel and chop the onions, add to the oil and cook gently.
3. Add coriander and stir well.
4. Peel and chop carrots, turnip, parsnips and potatoes and add to onions and coriander.
5. Add turkey stock and stir. Bring soup to a boil and then turn the heat down so soup is simmering.
6. Wash lentils in a sieve under a cold tap and add to soup. Stir well and cook for 15 - 20 minutes.
7. Wash the leek and remove tough outer leaves. Slice into rings and add to soup with ground black pepper.
8. Add the cooked turkey and cook the soup for 20-30 minutes till lentils are soft. Add a little water if necessary.
9. Season with ground black pepper and a little salt if liked, to bring out the flavour of the vegetables.
10. Serve with wheaten or crusty bread. This soup can be kept in a covered bowl in the fridge for two days after cooking or can be frozen.



TURKEY AND BACON HASH

Ingredients (Serves 4)

2 large potatoes
1 small onion
1 cup Brussels sprouts
250g cooked turkey
4 rashers lean bacon
1 tablespoon vegetable oil

Equipment

Sharp knives
Chopping boards
Potato peeler
Frying pan
Wooden spoon

Method

1. Remove rind from the bacon and chop finely.
2. Trim the stalks of the Brussels sprouts removing any outer leaves. Wash and dry on paper towel and then cut in quarters.
3. Peel the onion and potatoes and chop them finely.
4. Heat the oil in the frying pan and add the bacon. Cook for 5 minutes.
5. Add the chopped onions and potatoes and cook until onion is soft and potatoes and bacon are turning golden.
6. Add the Brussels sprouts and ground black pepper and stir well. Cook for a further 5 minutes.



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