Get Ready for the Big Meal!

The holidays are quickly approaching and it’s normal to feel a little overwhelmed at the thought of preparing the “big” meal. Below are some tips and resources available to assist with the meal preparation and any questions that may arise regarding food safety during the process.

One great resource is the local University of Idaho county Extension office. You are always welcome (and encouraged) to call us for advice. There are experts in offices located throughout the Treasure Valley region (see box at left) that can assist with concerns about food-related topics such as safety, health, and nutrition. Offices are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Another valuable resource at your disposal is Butterball. Traditionally, assistance from this company has been available to consumers via phone (1-844-877-3457) where trained experts are on call. But with societal needs changing, this company has added more contact methods. You can now chat live at http://www.butterball.com/contact-us or via text messaging. New this year are many simple videos that can be viewed on their website at www.butterball.com. They also feature some unique holiday side dishes as well as tips and tricks to use in the kitchen.

The best way to ensure a low-stress holiday season is to do some pre-planning. Set aside time in advance to: 1) choose your recipes; 2) calculate a budget for ingredients; 3) note preparation time required; and 4) consider the equipment needed. Many factors go into successfully hosting big meals, but with some organizational forethought stress can be kept to a minimum.

One last tip: you don’t have to do this alone—try reaching out to those who will be joining you and ask for their assistance. This is a way to include everyone in the event—you may even find that they are delighted to be asked!

Surine Greenway
Owyhee County Educator
Healthier the Second Time Around

Transform holiday turkey and other leftovers into nutritious new meals.

The holidays often leave us with big portions of uneaten food, so maybe it’s time to make some changes to minimize food waste while helping your grocery budget.

Simply “nuking” leftovers in the microwave can be unappealing, so finding simple and creative ways to make them healthy the second time around (maybe even healthier than they were originally) is a worthwhile goal. Leftovers should be easier than the first meal so keep it simple.

**ADD VEGGIES:** Leftovers present an opportunity to add healthy ingredients that may have been lacking the first time around. Leftover pasta, for example, gets new life and improved nutrition by adding fresh or frozen vegetables—a sort of retrofitted pasta primavera. Cook tougher veggies before mixing in; tender vegetables and many frozen ones can cook right along with the reheating pasta.

Even leftover holiday dishes typically not known for their nutritional benefits can turn into healthy second-chance meals. You can do a lot of creative things with turkey in stir-fry dishes. Start by adding vegetables. You might even be able to use some of the holiday sweet potatoes—kind of a re-do without the gravy.

Extra turkey can turn into turkey tacos, served with beans, lettuce, tomatoes and “lite” shredded cheese or sour cream, or quick quesadillas. Give chunks of turkey an Asian twist with a simple no-cook satay dipping sauce of peanut butter, low-sodium soy sauce and/or fish sauce, chili sauce and lime juice. Turkey soup is another easy way to use up those plentiful leftovers while incorporating extra veggies; make a simple stock from your turkey wings and back, or use low-sodium pre-made stock. Or add beans to make a quick turkey chili that’s high in protein and lower in saturated fat than traditional beef chili.

**SECOND CHANCES:** Leftovers can also serve as secondary ingredients in nutritious grain dishes, with lots of vegetables in the mix. Turkey, chicken or pork work well in whole-grain couscous dishes or fried brown rice.

And don’t forget pizza. Already-cooked chicken or turkey can take the place of processed meats like pepperoni or sausage atop store-bought pizza crusts or simple packaged flatbreads. Crisp a flatbread in the oven, then top with a thin smear of tomato sauce (or, for variety, low-calorie ranch or blue-cheese dressing), shredded chicken or turkey, sliced bell peppers, a few tomato slices and a scattering of light mozzarella cheese. *(If you’re going the no-tomato-sauce route, add little bits of blue, feta, goat, or brie cheese and use less mozzarella.)* Pop back in the oven until the cheese melts—it’s dinner in 15 minutes.

Using those leftovers crowding your fridge can help you feel you’re doing your part to reduce food waste; giving them healthy reincarnations may also reduce your guilt about the holiday indulgences you gave into the first time around.

Source: adapted from Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, November 2015
GERD and Tips to Help Control It

Do you sometimes suffer a burning sensation behind your breastbone? If so, you’re far from alone. An estimated 44% of American adults suffer heartburn at least once a month, and about 20% have a serious form called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

Occasional heartburn may be uncomfortable but is nothing to worry about, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. If you get heartburn more than two days a week, however, you should tell your doctor.

Heartburn (which has nothing to do with your heart) is also known as gastroesophageal reflux (GER), acid indigestion, acid reflux, acid regurgitation and heartburn reflux. By whatever name, it’s caused by a weak lower esophageal sphincter or one that relaxes when it shouldn’t. This sphincter, a ring of muscle, ordinarily acts as a valve between the esophagus and the stomach, opening to let through the food and liquids you swallow. With heartburn, that one-way passage becomes bidirectional.

Frequent heartburn could be a sign of GERD, in which stomach acids flow up into the esophagus so often that they can cause damage. Other symptoms of GERD include:

- Regurgitation of gastric acid or sour contents into the mouth.
- Difficult and/or painful swallowing.
- Chest pain.
- Chronic cough (caused by acid refluxing up).
- Bad breath.
- Nausea or vomiting.

GERD symptoms should not be ignored, as the untreated condition can lead to serious complications. Damage to the esophagus can scar and narrow it, making swallowing difficult, and the inflammation can cause bleeding or ulcers. GERD can also be a precursor to a condition called Barrett’s esophagus, which in turn can lead to esophageal cancer.

Although foods don’t cause GERD, certain foods can trigger your painful symptoms. Some lower the sphincter pressure between the stomach and esophagus, making it easier for stomach acid to reflux up; these can include high-fat foods, alcohol, peppermint, onions, carbonated beverages and chocolate. Other foods, such as citrus and spicy dishes, stimulate the already irritated nerve endings in the lining of the esophagus. Common beverages such as coffee (both caffeinated and decaffeinated), tea, cola, tomato juice and orange juice may also aggravate symptoms.

Other steps you can take to help control your GERD symptoms this holiday season include:

- **Eat frequent lighter meals and snacks.** Large quantities of food take more time to digest.
- **Lose weight.** Cutting calories from unhealthy sources such as starches and added sugars can reduce your risk for heartburn and GERD, which have been linked to being overweight.
- **Chew gum after meals** to stimulate saliva production. Your saliva contains compounds that help neutralize stomach acids and increase peristalsis, the process that moves contents from the stomach to the small intestine. Pick a flavor other than peppermint.
- **Drink a small glass of water after a meal.** This could help dilute and wash down any refluxing stomach acids.
- **Skip carbonated beverages,** especially with meals. Carbonation can bloat the abdomen, pressing on your stomach and pushing stomach acids upward.
- **Eat more fiber.** One study found that people whose diets were high in fiber were less likely to have heartburn and GERD symptoms, regardless of their body weight.
- **Don’t lie down within three hours of eating,** when acid production is at its peak. If you’re an early-to-bed person, plan early dinners and avoid bedtime snacks.
- **Raise the head of your bed six to eight inches.** Extra pillows under your head probably won’t do the trick; special foam wedges, sold in bedding stores and through medical supply houses, are needed to raise your upper body enough. Or put blocks of wood under the bedposts at the head end.
- **Quit smoking.** The chemicals in cigarette smoke may relax the esophageal sphincter and allow reflux of digestive acids.
- **Avoid tight-fitting waistbands and clothes that squeeze your middle.**
- **Check with your doctor** to find out if you are taking any medication that could be promoting heartburn. There might be an alternative you could take.

These small changes in your lifestyle could pay big dividends in your quality of life, not only reducing discomfort over the holidays but possibly long-term risks to your health.

Source: adapted from Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, December 2016
Cranberry-Glazed Turkey Dinner

This holiday meal is so easy, you will want to make it throughout the year!

If the prospect of cooking a whole turkey seems like too much work and too much hassle, consider roasting a boneless turkey breast. While the oven is on, you can roast seasonal vegetables to accompany the turkey for a festive and healthy meal that comes together with little fuss. This makes enough to serve four, plus leftover turkey to enjoy in sandwiches and salads. A whole-grain side like farro or wild rice would round out the meal beautifully. You can substitute other vegetables for the squash and Brussels sprouts; try sweet potatoes and cauliflower.

INGREDIENTS
- 1 boneless turkey breast half
- 2 tbsp olive oil or vegetable oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 4 cups brussels sprouts, cored and halved
- 1 tbsp prepared cranberry sauce
- 4 cups cubed (¼-inch pieces) peeled butternut squash
- 1½ tsp balsamic vinegar
- ¼ tsp dried thyme

INGREDIENTS FOR GRAVY
- ¼ cup fruit juice (pomegranate, cranberry, cherry, orange or apple) or fortified wine (port or madeira)
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 medium shallot, finely chopped (2 Tbsp)
- 1 Tbsp cornstarch, mixed with 2 Tbsp water
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard

STEPS
1. To roast turkey and vegetables: Preheat oven to 325°F with racks on middle and bottom positions. Coat a small roasting pan that can be used over direct heat (a 10-inch cast-iron or stainless skillet works well) with cooking spray.
2. Remove skin from turkey breast and trim off any fat. Pat turkey dry. Brush with 1 Tbsp oil and sprinkle with ½ tsp salt and ¼ tsp pepper. Place turkey in prepared roasting pan. Roast on bottom rack of oven for 30 minutes, basting with pan juices once or twice.
3. Meanwhile, coat a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Toss squash with 1½ tsp oil, ⅔ tsp each salt and pepper in medium bowl. Spread squash on half of the baking sheet. Toss Brussels sprouts with remaining 1½ tsp oil and remaining ⅔ tsp each salt and pepper in the bowl. Spread sprouts on remaining half of baking sheet.
4. After turkey has roasted 30 minutes, place baking sheet with vegetables on middle rack of oven. Roast for 30 minutes, stirring vegetables once or twice. Meanwhile, mix cranberry sauce, vinegar and thyme in small bowl.
5. After turkey has roasted 1 hour, brush cranberry mixture over turkey (try to keep the glaze on the turkey and avoid spilling it in the pan). Continue roasting turkey until an instant-read thermometer inserted in thickest part registers 165°F, 10 to 30 minutes longer. (Temperature will increase to 170°F during resting.) Total cooking time for turkey is about 70-90 minutes. Transfer turkey to a cutting board, cover loosely with foil and let rest for about 15 minutes. (Do not wash roasting pan.)
6. Continue roasting vegetables until they are tender. If one vegetable is tender before the other, transfer to a bowl and keep warm. (Total cooking time for vegetables is about 60 minutes.)
7. Meanwhile, make gravy: Add shallot to roasting pan. Place over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add juice or wine and vinegar; bring to a simmer. Cook 2 minutes. Add broth and return to a simmer. Simmer about 2 minutes to intensify flavors. Stir cornstarch mixture and add to the pan. Cook, whisking constantly, until sauce has thickened, about 1 minute. Whisk in mustard.
8. Slice turkey breast; serve with vegetables and gravy.

Yield: Serves 4, with leftover turkey (serving size: 3 oz cooked turkey, 1 cup vegetables and ¼ cup gravy).

Per serving: Cal: 310; Total fat: 7 g; Sat fat: 1.5 g; Cholesterol: 60 mg; Sodium: 330 mg; Carb: 33 g; Fiber: 7 g; Sugars: 9 g; Protein: 30 g.

Source: Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, October 2016

Avocado Ranch Dressing

Less than one-third the sodium of commercial varieties of ranch dressing.

- 1 ripe avocado
- ¼ cup low-fat cultured buttermilk
- 2 tbsp distilled white vinegar
- 1 tsp garlic powder (not garlic salt)
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh chives (or 2 tbsp dried)
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley (or 1 tsp dried)

Halve 1 ripe avocado and remove pit. Scoop flesh into a blender. Add ¼ cup well-shaken low-fat cultured buttermilk, 2 Tbsp distilled white vinegar, 1 tsp powder (not garlic salt), 1 tsp onion powder, 1 tsp sugar, ¼ tsp salt and ¼ tsp pepper. Cover and blend until smooth. Transfer dressing to a bowl or jar. Stir in 2 Tbsp chopped fresh chives (or 2 tbsp dried) and 1 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley (or 1 tsp dried). Dressing will keep (covered) in the refrigerator for up to 2 days or in the freezer for up to 4 months.

Yield: 1¼ cups total; 10 (2-Tbsp) servings.

Per serving: Cal 45, Fat 3 g (Sat 0.5 g, F:5 6), Carb 4 g, Total sugars 1 g (Added < 0.5 g), Fiber 1 g, Protein 1 g, Sodium 80 mg, Potassium 108 mg, Calcium 24 mg, Vitamin D 0 mcg, Iron 0 mg.

Source: Tufts Health & Nutrition Newsletter, March 2017