Healthier Thanksgiving Dinner Menu Guide

The holiday season is quickly approaching. For many, that means food oriented family time. After chaning my diet, I realized just how food oriented people's lives are. Often times, this can make visiting family for the holidays somewhat difficult. It can be challenging to eat as well as I want to when I'm surronded by people who don't understand my lifestyle, and who value different things in food than I do.

That being said, you can still have a traditional Thanksgiving dinner that's sure to impress your family, without using refined foods.

This year for dinner, I'll be making the following:

- Turkey
- Dressing
- Sweet potato casserole
- Mashed potatoes
- Green beans
- Brussel sprouts
- Cranberry sauce
- Sourdough bread
- Brown butter plum pie
- Cranberry crumble pie
- Apple Sage Gouda pie

Full disclosure, we don't eat like this all the time. The recipes included in this article are much better than your traditional Thanksgiving foods, but are not recommended if you haven't healed your gut! Having a healthy gut full of good bacteria allows you to eat more foods without as many problems. Don't forget to eat your salads, folks!

Turkey

Turkey is one of the dirtiest animals we eat. Read this article to learn more about how to shop for meat in a way that benefits both your health and the environment! I highly encourage you to buy a pasture-raised organic turkey from a small local farm if you have the means.

For the turkey, you'll need the following ingredients:

- A whole thawed Turkey, between 12-15 pounds
- Salt
- Pepper
- Paprika
- Turmeric
- Coriander
- 2 tablespoons of chopped rosemary
- 2 tablespoons of chopped sage
- 2 tablespoons of chopped thyme
- 3 tablespoons of chopped parsley
- 2 tablespoons of chopped oregano
- ¼ cup butter
- 1 quart of chicken stock
- 4 stalks of celery
- 4 large carrots
- 1 large onion
- 4-5 garlic cloves

Feel free to adjust the quantity of ingredients depending on the size of your turkey.

Make sure your turkey is completely thawed. Remove the innards and set aside for gravy (if you plan on making gravy). At this point, you can do a salt brine the day before, but it's optional.

Chop up carrots celery and potatoes, and put them in your roasting pan before you put the turkey in the pan. I recommend

cooking the turkey breast down, to keep the turkey moist.

Melt your butter in a pan, add your herbs, seasoning, garlic, and onion, 1/2 chicken stock, and sautee.

Take the liquid from the mixture and inject it into the turkey, and pour the rest over the top. Stuff the herbs and garlic inside the turkey. Pour more chicken broth over the top, about 2 cups.

Rub the turkey with salt, pepper, and corn starch (corn starch is optional). Put the turkey in the oven at 325 degrees.

Before the last hour of baking, pull the turkey out and flip it over, At this point, you can rub the turkey down again with a little bit of salt, pepper, and corn starch. Take the juice from the bottom of the roasting pan and inject turkey. Pull the liquid out from the bottom with a turkey baster and set aside for gravy. Your turkey is ready when it reaches an internal temperature of 165. Allow it to rest before carving.

Dressing

- 2 loaves sourdough bread
- 3 links Italian sausage
- 2 onions
- 5-7 cloves of garlic
- 4 large carrots
- 4 stalks of celery
- 3 teaspoons chopped oregano
- 3 teaspoons chopped thyme
- 3 teaspoons chopped sage
- 1 cup chicken stock
- salt
- pepper
- paprika
- turmeric

Prior to making the dressing, you'll want to bake two loaves of sourdough bread or buy two loaves of sourdough bread. (For health reasons, we highly recommend making your own.) Start by cutting your sourdough bread into cubes. Lay them flat on a tray and toast them.

While your bread is toasting, you'll want to add Italian sausage to a pan on the stove. Chop up your onions, garlic, carrots, and celery. Add your vegetables to your pan when your sausage is about ⅔ cooked. I recommend doing this in a deep cast iron pan. Once you add your vegetables, season with salt, pepper, turmeric, and paprika to taste and add fresh herbs. Add chicken stock and let it cook down with the lid off. Once the liquid has cooked out, add your toasted bread and mix to combine. Add a little more chicken stock depending on the consistency you're looking for in your dressing. At this point in time, you can bake the dressing in the oven, or make it a day ahead of time, put it in the fridge, and then bake it shortly before the turkey is ready. You can transfer your dressing to a casserole dish or bake your dressing in a cast-iron dish. Bake at 350 for 30 minutes.

Sweet Potato Casserole

- 5-6 large sweet potatoes
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 teaspoons of salt
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 tablespoons cream cheese (optional)
- ½ cup of chopped pecans, walnuts, or a mixture of both

Bake sweet potatoes in the oven at 350 degrees until tender.

Pull your sweet potatoes out of the oven and allow them to

cool slightly before peeling them and mashing them in a bowl. After you mash your sweet potatoes, add butter, vanilla extract, and spices. I recommend salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, ground cloves, and ground ginger. You can also add a generous spoonful of cream cheese. If you're trying to be as healthy as possible, I would skip this step, but it's a great trick for impressing normal people with your cooking. Mix to combine and then spread your sweet potatoes into a casserole dish. You can top with (or mix in) crushed pecans and/or walnuts. At this point, you can either bake the sweet potato casserole in the oven or put it in the fridge if you want to make it ahead of time and bake it the next day.

Bake at 350 for 20 minutes.

Mashed potatoes

- 8-12 white potatoes (of your choice)
- 5-6 cloves of garlic
- ¼ cup butter
- salt
- pepper
- paprika
- 2 tablespoons cream cheese (optional)

Fill a pot with 8-12 white potatoes, depending on how many people you're cooking for. Cover with water and boil until the potatoes are tender and bursting out of the skin.

I don't like to peel my potatoes. It takes 10 times longer to make the mashed potatoes, and I've never minded potato skins in my potatoes, but if you prefer them peeled, then feel free to do that.

After your potatoes are cooked, add salt, pepper, paprika, fresh garlic, and butter. This is another case where a generous spoonful of cream cheese will impress your guests, but again, it's optional. Mix together and mash your potatoes

to the consistency you want them to be. Generally, I don't mind lumps in my potatoes, and I mash by hand. If you cook your potatoes long enough, mashing them by hand shouldn't be too hard.

Green Beans

- 1 pound green beans
- 3-4 mushrooms, sliced
- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- 4-5 cloves of garlic
- ¼ cup sliced almonds
- 2 pieces of bacon, chopped
- salt
- pepper
- paprika

Cook your bacon in a pan. After the bacon is cooked, chop it up and add it back into the pan with avocado oil. Snap the ends of the green beans off and add them to your pan. Add fresh garlic, mushrooms, sliced almonds, and bacon. Season with salt, pepper, and paprika. Sautee until tender.

Brussels Sprouts

- I pound Brussels sprouts
- 5 cloves garlic
- 2 pieces bacon, chopped
- 1-2 tablespoons of avocado oil
- ¼ cup feta cheese
- salt
- pepper

For extra crispy brussels sprouts, I recommend thinly slicing your brussels sprouts, but you can also halve or quarter them. Cut your brussels sprouts up, add salt and pepper, avocado oil, and bacon. Toss to mix well, and bake until extra crispy

(20-30 minutes ar 400 works for me). Shortly before the brussels sprouts are done, pull them out of the oven and add feta cheese crumbles. You can also cook them in a cast-iron pan on the stove or cook them on the stove and finish in the oven. Just baking them is a more hands-free option if you have multiple things to cook at once.

Cranberry Sauce

- 12 ounces fresh cranberries
- Juice from half a lime
- One Satsuma (A tangerine or clementine will do, but satsumas are best)
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- Granulated monk fruit to taste
- Salt

Cranberry sauce is best if you make it the day before. Take fresh cranberries, a satsuma, some fresh lime juice, a little bit of cinnamon, and monk fruit to taste. Blend all the ingredients in a food processor and refrigerate until dinner time.

Sourdough Bread

This is my favorite sourdough bread recipe. Read this article to learn more about why sourdough is so much better for you than regular bread. Take your loaf of bread and slice it until to the point where you can fan the bread out, but not so far that you have cut it all the way through. Melt butter in a pan on the stove. Add fresh chopped herbs and fresh garlic. Pour over the bread and put it in the oven to toast.

Desserts

Obviously, Thanksgiving dinner wouldn’t be complete without pies for dessert, and with my recipes, I promise no one will

know they’re sugar-free. I have a couple of secrets to the perfect pie, the first one being the pie crust. I’ve tried gluten-free alternatives and they work okay, but I haven’t been able to achieve that perfect sought-after flakey buttery pie crust using gluten-free flour. The solution? Sourdough pie crust. Instead of using ice-cold water, I use ice cold-active sourdough starter with high-quality organic flour (Bob’s mill all-purpose organic flour if you’re buying from the grocery store). Sourdough breaks down gluten differently than regular yeast bread. Many people with gluten intolerances are able to eat homemade sourdough with little to no problems. Again, this is not a good idea if you haven’t healed the gut.

The second trick is tapioca starch. I’m pretty sure that most people aren’t new to tapioca starch, but I only came across it relatively recently. Tapioca starch works just like corn starch but it has a slightly sweeter flavor. I add tapioca starch to all my pies.

The third trick is granulated monk fruit. This is what we use instead of granulated sugar, and we use way less than the recipe calls for. If you use high-quality, sweet fruit, you really won’t need much (unless you’re working with something sour like cranberries. Then you might need a larger amount). You can find granulated monk fruit at a health food store if your grocery store doesn’t have it. You may also be able to find it in bulk at Costco.

Full disclaimer, these pies are from the Sister Pie Cookbook. Sister pie is a local bakery not too far from my house that is known for its pies and baked goods. These recipes are tweaked to fit our diet.

Pie Crust

Add 2.5 cups of your flour and a pinch of salt (I recommend Bob’s Red Mill organic all-purpose flour) to a bowl, and then add 1 cup of ice-cold butter. Begin to break up the butter and

combine the flour and butter with your fingers into smaller pieces, until you have a mixture resembling Kraft parmesan cheese. (This is a tip from my Sister Pie Cookbook. After lots of experimentation, I can confirm that this is the way to achieve the best pie crust.)

Add half a cup of active sourdough starter and mix until combined. Use your hands to bring the mixture together into a dough. Divide the dough into 2 discs. You'll want to refrigerate this dough for at least two hours or up to two days. If you're not planning on making pie within 2 days, you can freeze the pie dough. This makes enough pie dough for 1 double-crust pie or 2 single-crust pies.

These pie recipes call for brown sugar. To make a brown sugar substitute, I mix a teaspoon of molasses into granulated monk fruit. You can skip this step if you don't want to use molasses, as it is technically a refined sugar.

Brown Butter Plum Pie

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup gluten-free flour of your choice (I like chickpea. I don't recommend coconut flour.)
- up to ½ cup granulated "brown sugar" monk fruit
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 pounds of plums (Stanley, Santa Rosa, Early Golden, or plutos plums)
- juice from ½ a lemon
- ¼ tapioca starch
- ⅓ cup of granulated monk fruit (more or less depending on how sweet you want your pie)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- about 2 tablespoons of cream cheese

I know it isn't plum season, but we live in a world where you can probably find plums at the grocery store that will do just

fine. That being said, the thing that makes this pie so spectacular is the brown butter. I'd never actually used browned butter before making this pie, and have since decided that I never want to use any other sort of butter.

Before you make the pie, roll out the pie dough into a circle with a diameter of 12-13 inches and fit it into the pie pan. Chill your pie crust in the freezer until you're ready to bake the pie.

Start the pie by making 1 cup of brown butter. You can do this a couple of days ahead of time. To make the crumble streusel topping combine 1 cup of gluten-free flour (I generally use chickpea), salt, and up to ½ cup of "brown sugar" monk fruit, and cinnamon. I generally adjust this and use slightly more flour and less sweetener, but it's a personal preference. Cut the brown butter into cubes and add it to the flour mixture. Break up the butter with your fingers and combine with the flour mixture until you achieve the consistency of wet sand.

Make the pie filling. Slice the plums and throw them into a bowl. Add lemon juice, granulated monk fruit, tapioca starch, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Toss to combine.

Assemble the pie. Spread cream cheese over the pie crust, pour in your pie filling, and top with your crumble. Leave a hole in the top for ventilation. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees, for about an hour, until the topping is golden brown and the filling is bubbling over. Allow it to cool before serving.

Cranberry Crumble Pie

- one pie crust
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup gluten-free flour of your choice (I like chickpea, I don't recommend coconut flour)
- up to ½ cup granulated "brown sugar" monk fruit
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

- compote
- 12 ounces fresh cranberries
- ¼ cup “brown sugar” monk fruit (more or less for personal preferences)
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- juice from half an orange (freshly squeezed)
- 8 ounces fresh cranberries
- ½ Bosc or D’Anjou pear, grated
- ¼ cup tapioca starch
- up to ¾ cup of granulated monk fruit
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- 1 ½ teaspoon of salt
- 2 tablespoons of cream cheese at room temperature

Make the cranberry compote first. Combine cranberries, orange zest and juice, and brown sugar in a pan. While I like my cranberry pie on the tart side, not everyone does, so I always taste test along the way to make sure it’s sweet enough. Cook over medium-low heat until the cranberries begin to burst and then set it aside to cool.

To make the crumble streusel topping, combine 1 cup of gluten-free flour (I generally use chickpea), salt, and up to ½ cup of granulated monk fruit*. Cut the butter into cubes, and add it to the flour mixture. Break up the butter with your fingers and combine it with the flour mixture until you achieve the consistency of wet sand.

Make the filling. Combine cranberries, pears, cooled compote, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, monk fruit, and tapioca starch in a bowl.

Assemble the pie. Spread cream cheese over the bottom of the pie crust, pour in your pie filling, and top with your crumble. Leave a hole in the top for ventilation. Set it in the freezer to rest for 15 minutes then bake it in the oven at

350 degrees for about an hour – until the topping is golden brown and the filling is bubbling over. Allow it to cool before serving.

Apple Sage Gouda pie

- 2 discs of pie dough
- 2 pounds of golden apples
- juice from ½ a lemon
- ¼ cup “brown sugar” monk fruit (more or less depending on how sweet you like it)
- 2 tablespoons of fresh sage
- ¼ cup tapioca starch
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons of butter cubed and chilled

For the apple Gouda pie, I make regular pie crust and add about ⅓ cup of Gouda cheese to the pie dough before I add the sourdough starter.

Cut up the apples and toss with lemon juice in a large bowl. In another bowl, combine monk fruit, sage, tapioca starch, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Set aside a spoonful to sprinkle over the bottom of the pie crust. Add the rest of the mixture to the apples, and toss to combine.

Assemble the pie. Sprinkle your monk fruit mixture over the bottom of the pie crust, add your apples, and dot the apple mixture with butter cubes. I like to top this pie with a lattice strip top or the same crumble used in the brown butter plum pie. This article goes into how to do different lattice strips on a pie. Personally, I prefer the thick lattice. It requires the least amount of weaving.

Top with your lattice strips or crumble. Let your pie rest in

the freezer for 15 minutes, before baking.

Bake at 450 for about 15 minutes until the pie crust is golden brown (if you topped the pie with dough instead of crumble) and then reduce the temperature to 325. Bake for about an hour, until the juices are bubbling in the center. Allow it to cool before serving.

Conclusion

This dinner isn’t gluten-free, or keto. It doesn’t follow any of the specific diet trends that are currently popular. Instead, it focuses on making dinner with the freshest, healthiest ingredients while being as unprocessed as possible.

This will likely be the healthiest Thanksgiving dinner your guests have ever eaten, but I still wouldn’t recommend this dinner for anyone who hasn’t healed their gut. In preparation for Thanksgiving dinner, I always make sure I’m eating a salad a day and drinking lots of cranberry lemonade.