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December 22, 2015

## 7 Thanksgiving side dishes to add variety to your table

Fruit, vegetable and grain dishes are strong supporting players to the turkey



MARY ELLEN WRIGHT | Staff Writer Nov 25, 2015 Comments





When you think of Thanksgiving dinner, the first thing that probably comes to mind is the turkey.

But maybe not everyone around your family table eats meat.

So it's over the holiday's side dishes that we all come together. Carnivores and vegetarians can all find something yummy and traditional, sitting on smaller plates in the shadow of the noble bird.

Side dishes can be similar to what your family has eaten for generations without being exactly what your grandmother cooked, says Dianne Gadbois, a chef-instructor at the Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts at Lancaster's YTI Career Institute.

Before the Lancaster native came back home 11 years ago, Gadbois was a chef at the Four Seasons and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Boston.

"Vegetables and grains most assuredly don't have to be boring," Gadbois says. "With a few simple techniques and ideas, they can be just as delectable as the main course."

Gadbois recommends choosing foods that are in season for your holiday side dishes.

"Thanksgiving dinner is based on tradition, and before jet engines and food from all over the world at any given time of the year, traditionally you ate what was seasonal. So that's why we eat what we eat (on Thanksgiving)."

Gadbois says that when she's cooking her own family's Thanksgiving dinner, she likes to take traditional foods and put a new spin on them for side dishes.

"To me, Thanksgiving is such a family-oriented, tradition-based meal but, at the same time, the way your grandmother cooked probably isn't the way you want to eat it now. "

Gadbois says her side dishes are healthier now than they would have been generations ago.

"Over the years I've backed off on the amount of butter I put in the stuffing," Gadbois says. "With broccoli, we won't put the cheese or Hollandaise sauce on them anymore. We'll put roasted garlic and a little bit of brown butter. It still feels like a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, but you don't have that carb coma when you're all done."

Vegetarians and vegans don't have to fear the Thanksgiving meal, Gadbois adds.

"If you think about Thanksgiving dinner, the only thing about it that is not vegetarian is the turkey," she says.

"Everything else on the table, assuming (your guests) are lacto-ovo (meaning that they eat dairy products and eggs), everything else at the table you can eat."

For the vegans at the table, she says, just substitute vegetable stock for the liquid in your side dishes.

“I think that a lot of times fruits and vegetables taste really great together,” Gadbois says. “We don’t traditionally think about them going together.”

Gadbois serves a Brussels sprouts recipe that uses a pomegranate glaze, for example.

“The tart and fruity tastes really good with the cabbage-y flavor. They kind of balance each other out.”

Gadbois also recommends roasting your fruits and vegetables for side dishes, because they “contain natural sugars that taste much richer, deeper and more complex when roasted. The process caramelizes the natural sugars and adds a richness that is incomparable. “

And most vegetables, she says, “benefit from a light blanching and a gentle toss in olive or walnut oil and a splash of salt, before roasting them on moderate heat for 20 minutes or so.”

Here is her Brussels sprouts recipe.

## Glazed Brussels Sprouts

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish

Ingredients:

- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, fresh, cleaned and halved or quartered
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ medium onion, diced
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup
- 4 tablespoons pomegranate juice
- 1/3 cup slivered almonds, toasted
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper.

Directions:

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. The water should be salty like the ocean, to draw out the bitterness in the Brussels sprouts.

In a saute pan, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the olive oil and heat until shimmering.

Add the onions and cook until soft and translucent. Add the garlic and cook another 1 to 2 minutes, until the garlic

is fragrant. Transfer this mixture to a bowl.

Using the same saute pan, add the maple syrup and pomegranate juice and bring to a boil.

Continue boiling until the liquid has reduced by half.

Put the Brussels sprouts in the boiling water and cook for 3 to 4 minutes, until not quite tender. Drain and add to the saute pan.

Return the onion mixture to the saute pan and add the toasted almonds. Season with salt and pepper and toss all ingredients together, until well combined. Increase the heat to high and toss until the mixture is hot. Serve.

#### **Variations:**

- Add crumbled, crispy bacon bits.
- Use different kinds of nuts — pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, etc.
- Substitute orange juice for the pomegranate juice.
- Peel, core and dice a pear and saute with the onions, adding them in the last couple minutes of cooking.

— *Chef Dianne Gadbois*

## Roasted Cipollini Onions

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 pound Cipollini onions
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 ounces goat cheese or feta cheese

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the Cipollini onions and boil for 1 minute. Allow to rest a few more minutes and drain. Trim the stem end and root end and peel off the skin.

Toss the onions with the olive oil and thyme sprigs and season lightly with salt and pepper. Lay out on an oven-safe pan and roast in the oven until golden brown, about 20 to 30 minutes.

In a saute pan, bring the honey and balsamic vinegar to a boil. Remove the thyme sprigs. Add the onions and toss.

Continue sauteing until the honey-balsamic mixture forms a light glaze on the onions. Toss with the chopped parsley and season with salt and pepper.

Put onions in your serving dish and top with crumbled goat cheese or feta cheese. Serve.

Variations:

- Substitute sherry vinegar for the balsamic.
- Substitute maple syrup for the honey.
- Add toasted nuts, for texture.

— *Chef Dianne Gadbois*

## Caramelized Onion Bread Pudding

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish

- 1 pound onions, sliced thinly
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 8 ounces French bread baguette, diced in ½-inch cubes
- 3 large eggs
- 2 ½ cups milk or mixture of half milk, half cream
- 6 ounces grated Parmesan cheese
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, minced, or ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 2 tablespoons chives, snipped
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

#### Directions:

- Melt the butter in a large heavy-bottomed pan, over medium low heat. Choose the widest pan you have, because the more surface area you have on the bottom, the faster your onions will caramelize.
- Add olive oil and heat until shimmering. Add thinly sliced onions and stir to coat the onions with oil mixture. Continue cooking slowly over medium low heat and stirring frequently, for about 10 minutes.
- Sprinkle onions with the sugar and the salt and continue cooking, until the onions are well caramelized, about 10 to 15 minutes more. Allow onions to cool slightly, before mixing into custard mixture.
- Beat the eggs well. Add milk, salt, pepper, thyme, chives and nutmeg and incorporate completely. Add bread cubes, caramelized onions and grated cheese and mix well.
- Prepare a baking dish by spraying lightly with pan spray. Pour in bread pudding mixture and allow to rest at least 30 mins.
- Place bread pudding into a 350-degree oven and bake 40 minutes, or until a knife inserted into the center comes out cleanly.
- Allow to rest 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

Notes: Be patient with the caramelization of the onions. The rich flavor is worth the wait.

Go light on the nutmeg. The pudding should have just a hint of nutmeg, but not have a distinct nutmeg flavor.

#### Variations:

- For a richer pudding, top the pudding with knobs of whole butter, before baking.
- Add 2 or 3 cloves of minced garlic to the onions in the last couple minutes of caramelization.
- Try a creamier cheese, such as Fontina or Manchego
- Substitute potatoes for the bread, but reduce the custard by about half.
- Switch out the thyme and chives for oregano and parsley.
- Bake in individual ramekins or custard cups and invert on the serving plates.

— *Chef Dianne Gadbois*

## Fall Wild Rice Pilaf

Serves 4 to 6 as a side dish

- 1 cup wild rice
- 3 cups vegetable or chicken stock, or as needed
- 1 medium onion, small dice

- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- 1 cup green or red grapes, quartered
- ½ cup pecans, chopped and toasted
- 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

**Directions:**

Heat a saucepan on medium heat and melt the butter. When melted, add the olive oil and heat until shimmering. Add the onion and cook until translucent and tender. Add the minced garlic and heat for 1 to 2 minutes, until the fragrance is released.

Add the wild rice and stir until all grains are coated with fat. Add the vegetable or chicken stock, increase heat to high and bring to a boil. Drop the heat to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes.

Add the dried cranberries and continue cooking another 10 to 20 minutes, until grains are tender and the ends of the rice grains are beginning to split. Keep an eye on the liquid level, as you may need to add more stock.

Stir in the grapes, toasted pecans and parsley and combine. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve.

**Notes:**

- If desired, stir in 1 to 2 tablespoons of whole butter, before service.
- Be careful to cook the wild rice fully, as it will be too crunchy, if undercooked

**Variations:**

- This is wonderful served as a cold salad, with a light lemon vinaigrette.
- Substitute other grains, such as barley, wheat berries or brown rice.

— *Chef Dianne Gadbois*

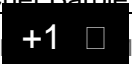
## Citrus flavors chutney

Barbie Marshall, a Strasburg chef and caterer who did cooking demonstrations last week at the Lancaster Food,

Wine & Spirits Festival and in the LNP studio, shares her cranberry chutney recipe.

You can watch the video of her making the dish below.

### Chef Barbie Marshall's citrus chutney

 Chef Barbie Marshall's Cranberry Citrus Chutney uses citrus juice and zest, a small amount of sugar and balsamic vinegar to balance the tart taste of the cranberries.

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## Cranberry Citrus Chutney

Makes 8 2-ounce servings

Ingredients:

- 3 cups (12-ounce bag) cranberries, fresh or frozen
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tangerine, 3 strips of zest and juiced
- 1 navel orange, 3 strips of zest and juiced
- juice of 1 lemon
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- pinch of salt

Directions:

In a medium, heavy-bottomed saucepan, combine cranberries, sugar, water, zests, juices and cinnamon stick over high heat.

Bring to the boil and watch for the cranberries to pop. Reduce to medium-low heat. Add vinegar and salt. Simmer 8-10 minutes until thickened.

Remove zests and cinnamon stick. Serve warm or prepare up to 5 days in advance and store in the refrigerator.

— *Chef Barbie Marshall*



### **From our readers**

Several readers responded to our request for side dish ideas (for a chance at a copy of “Baking with Whole Grains” cookbook by Valerie Baer, which was won by sweet potato casserole fan Crystal M. Schreffler of Lancaster).

Most comment were in favor of sweet potatoes, stuffing and cranberry sauce.

But a couple of readers sent in their family recipes, which we share below.

Cindy Dell of Lancaster offered this recipe, which she said her older sister always made for family Thanksgiving dinners because it’s easy to make and travels well.

## Peach Baskets

Makes 8 or 9 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 small (9-ounce) can sweet potatoes
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine
- 1 large can peach halves
- 2 teaspoons light brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

- Dash of salt (optional)
- Mini marshmallows, coconut or a little extra pumpkin pie spice for topping.

#### Directions:

Drain sweet potatoes. Mash with butter. Thoroughly drain juice from peach halves, reserving 1 tablespoon juice for sweet potato mixture. Blot peaches dry with paper towels.

Add peach juice, brown sugar, ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice and salt to sweet potato mixture. Blend well. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Mound sweet potato mixture on each peach half where the peach pit used to be, and top with marshmallows, coconut or a little sprinkle of pumpkin pie spice if desired. Arrange in a 10-by-6-inch baking dish that has been buttered or covered with cooking spray.

Bake 18-20 minutes or until heated through.

Serve with turkey, chicken, or ham.

And Sharon Cargill of Lancaster offered this cranberry side dish.

## Cranberry Fruit Salad with Whipped Cream

#### Ingredients:

- ¼ cup fresh cranberries
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 apple, with skin, washed and chopped
- 1 can mandarin orange slices
- ½ cup almonds, chopped
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- 1 cup of homemade whipped cream

#### Directions:

Put the cranberries and sugar in a food processor and use the pulse setting to mix and chop the cranberries (do not puree).

Combine the cranberry mixture with the apple, orange slices, almonds and marshmallows, the fold in the whipped cream and serve.



## SIDE DISH TIPS

Chef Dianne Gadbois, an instructor at the Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts, offers these tips for popular side-dish foods:

**Mashed potatoes:** “Use russet potatoes rather than all-purpose potatoes, because they’re starchier and you’ll get fluffier potatoes when you’re done. And make sure you cook them enough so they will quickly break down in your mixer so you don’t end up with gluey potatoes.”

**Sweet potatoes:** “If you’re going to bake them, like in a casserole, I like to slice them thinly and give them a blanch in salted water. So maybe just 2 or 3 minutes before you layer them (in the casserole). And they’re going to cook through more nicely and you’ll get a nicer brown color on them.”

**Stuffing:** Use vegetable stock if you’re serving it to vegetarians or vegans.

**Cranberries:** “Just cook them enough till they’re tender. And don’t think you’re going to serve cranberries raw in any way, shape or form. They’re way too sour, and they take a lot of sugar.” Cranberries go well “with tart, aromatic fruits” like raspberries and pomegranate.

**Green beans:** Gadbois loves this twist on the popular dish: Cook the beans “till they’re tender-crisp,” and then serve them with mint dressing. “You make a vinaigrette and use fresh mint, and toss it with your green beans and a little feta cheese and some toasted pecans (or walnuts) on top. It’s like heaven. I can eat soup bowls full of them.”

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