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# CRYSTEL MONTENEGRO HOME THANKSGIVING



Your complete guide to a beautiful  
& memorable Thanksgiving



*Thanksgiving has always been one of my favorite holidays, right up there with Christmas.*

*Being from the exceptionally large family that I am, I have vivid memories of the excitement that surrounded it with my siblings and their children all coming into town, the smell of homemade rolls and pies baking in the oven, and the blissfully chaotic bustle that comes with having that many people crammed into one house.*

*I have always placed a huge emphasis on family, and I hope to be able to create the same kind of nostalgia with our family holiday traditions my thanksgiving-loving mother did.*

*In this guide, I will be sharing family recipes, fun family traditions, music, smells and even decor ideas that will hopefully give you some ideas for ways to make the holidays special for your family. However, you know you better than I know you. Please do not feel like you have to do it all, or even any of it.*

*Please keep in mind that “**things**” are absolutely not necessary to make Thanksgiving a special event. Truly, the only two requirements for a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner party is the company and the food. And the quantity and quality of both of those can only be determined by you. Most likely you will find things in here that are not an option for you based on budget, priorities, or interest. That’s okay! But because hosting is something I enjoy and am now in a situation where I can, I prefer to go all out. For those who can’t or don’t want to, I will also try to provide some ideas that can help you have a more simple and streamlined gathering. I hope you enjoy!*

*Crystel Montenegro*



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# PREP SCHEDULE & RECIPE PLANNING

*Thanksgiving can be stressful, especially if you're feeding a large crowd and planning to do it all yourself. I love a good home-cooked meal during Thanksgiving but occasionally some things have got to give if you want to have any hope of getting any of it done. That could mean ordering a side or two (or the whole meal) instead of making it fresh. Or it could mean assigning your guests each a specific dish to make and bring (that's what I do!)*

*Or, maybe you enjoy the cooking aspect and you want to do it all and that's great too! I have included some of my personal family recipes in this e-book that are not only delicious but will also make a beautiful spread.*

*My goal was to give several different options so you can choose what best suits your taste buds, and these are not intended to all be cooked in the same meal, But, then again, if that appeals to you then do it! You can't go wrong with any of them. I have also included a checklist with a schedule to allow you to prepare for the meal and making Thanksgiving day go a little smoother. Enjoy!*





# PREP SCHEDULE

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## SUNDAY

- Pull turkey from freezer and begin thawing in fridge. If using a larger Turkey over 18-20 lbs, this is best done the friday or saturday before.
- Make shopping list, and plan list of serving dishes needed
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## MONDAY

- Shop for all ingredients
- Break bread for stuffing, and lay out in pans and dry on counter or in oven. Store until ready to make stuffing.
- Chop nuts for all recipes
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## TUESDAY

- Make Cranberry Sauce, cover, and store in fridge until ready to serve.
- Prep celery and onions for stuffing, store in fridge until ready to assemble.
- Wash and stem grapes and pomegranate seeds for salad. Store in refrigerator.
- Boil sweet potatoes, remove skin and mash store in fridge until ready to assemble. Sweet potato topping can also be made today.
- Pumpkin Cake can be made ahead if you have room in your fridge to store it. Otherwise, bake on Wednesday. Make cream cheese frosting ahead and store in refrigerator.
- Raspberry Pretzel Pie can be made ahead and requires refrigerator space as well.
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Notes:

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## WEDNESDAY

- Prep apples for Crisp and for Pomegranate Salad. Let sit in salt water bath for 5 minutes to prevent browning and then rinse and store in refrigerator. Apple Crisp topping can also be made ahead and refrigerated. Or if you prefer to serve it cold: Assemble and bake Crisp. Store in refrigerator if it won't be eaten within 48 hours.
- Make sweet potato casserole and bake or store in fridge based on your space. Can be baked ahead and reheated.
- Boil potatoes, mash and assemble and store in refrigerator until ready to be reheated on Thursday.
- Prep green beans: wash and trim
- Make rolls. Let cool and cover with plastic wrap until ready to serve.
- Assemble stuffing and store covered in refrigerator until ready to go in oven. Can be made ahead and reheated depending on oven and fridge space.
- Lay out all dishes to be used the next day.
- Pull out recipes and shelf stable ingredients to make the next day easier

## THANKSGIVING DAY

- Prep Turkey and put in oven to be ready one hour before dinner.
- Chill drink ingredients and prepare garnishes. Assemble just before serving.
- While Turkey is cooking... Whip cream for fruit salad and assemble. Store in fridge until ready to serve.
- Prep Brussel Sprouts, fry bacon, and cook. Squeeze with Lemon juice right before serving. Sauté green beans & make carrots.
- Once Turkey comes out of oven to rest. Re-heat potatoes, sweet potatoes and stuffing in oven.
- Remove Turkey juices and make gravy.
- If not made ahead, bake Apple Crisp in oven after all reheating is done. Serve warm after the meal. Wonderful with ice cream.
- Pull frosting for Pumpkin cake out of the refrigerator, let it come to room temperature and frost cake. Best kept in fridge if not eaten within 2 days.

Notes:

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# MAIN COURSE RECIPES

TO GET THE RECIPES, SIMPLY  
CLICK ON THE MENU ITEM PHOTO



SUPER MOIST & TENDER TURKEY



ALTON'S GARLIC MASHED POTATOES



STUFFING



CRANBERRY SAUCE



MOM'S TURKEY GRAVY



# SIDE DISH RECIPES

pick 2-3

TO GET THE RECIPES, SIMPLY  
CLICK ON THE MENU ITEM PHOTO



POMEGRANATE SALAD



MELS PERFECT DINNER ROLLS



BRUSSELS SPROUTS



NATE'S GREEN BEANS



SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE



CLASSIC & TASTY CARROTS



# DESSERT & DRINK RECIPES

TO GET THE RECIPES, SIMPLY  
CLICK ON THE MENU ITEM PHOTO



RENEE'S PUMPKIN CAKE



RASPBERRY PRETZEL PIE



INA'S OLD FASHIONED APPLE CRISP



LOLLY'S GOLD DRINK



HOMEMADE MARTINELLIS  
FROM PRETTY PROVIDENCE



# CREATING YOUR TABLESCAPE

*Aside from the family and food part of the Thanksgiving some of the excitement for me is the opportunity to create a “fancy dinner” to make the meal extra special.*

*This does not have to be expensive nor does it have to be extravagant, but depending on your personality and budget, it could be either. Here you will find a step by step guide on how to create a your beautiful table.*





1

*The very basics of a pretty table setting for me would be starting with something green. This could be made from a pretty faux garland or stems like ones I have linked, or it could be free clippings from a tree or bush outside if you live in a place where those sorts of things are still alive in November. It could also be fresh clippings from a grocery store or floral shop.*



2

*Candles of some sort would be the next basic step to creating a beautiful tablescape. These could include candlesticks or in the past I have also used just plain white pillar candles from the dollar store. Candles can add color, interest and ambiance to any table setting. I have seen beautiful tablescapes that are comprised of just greenery and candles. You could stop there if you like!*



*to get the links for these items, simply click on the photo.*

3

*The next basic step is to add color. I love using fruit and a table runner! Pomegranates and pears have been my go-to in the past, but also lemons, apples, oranges, and cranberries can look beautiful as well, either sliced or whole or a mix of both.*

*Pick 2-3 colors and try to stick with that, in varying shades for interest. Don't overthink it! Nature doesn't match perfectly, and can yet somehow be breathtakingly beautiful. Mimic nature and you can't go wrong.*

*In this year's table setting my main two colors were a burgundy/red and a rust/orange that were inspired by dehydrated oranges and pomegranates. (Hence, the dehydrator to the right). I also decided to throw in some different shades of green in there with artichokes and berries. The smaller scale of the berries paired with the larger pomegranates and artichokes added interest and beauty!*



**But Crystel, what about the food? Where does that go?**

Great question! With a large crowd I prefer that we serve our meals buffet style from the kitchen simply because there would not be enough room for all the plates and food at the same time on the table. However, if you are working with a smaller group and want the food on the table then by all means! Set your green base down, add the food and some candles and sprinkle cranberries or your fruit in between serving dishes for a beautiful display.

4

to get the links for these items, simply click on the photo.



**Dishes & cutlery.** Even if you're not working with real dishes, even disposable plates and cutlery can be made beautiful. Don't sweat it! The dollar store sells pretty white disposable dishes, and even "wine glasses" which I have used when setting up a dinner for 60+ people. Or, if you have a Costco membership and are feeding an extra large crowd Costco sells beautiful disposable dishes for an even better price. Because I entertain a lot and we use special dishes for birthdays and such, I have invested in some timeless white dishes with gold cutlery and glass goblets that I can use for any special occasion.

5




**Napkins, whether paper or cloth, can be folded prettily and used as part of the display as well to bring color and interest.** If you need ideas for how to make napkins beautiful, get on Pinterest and find some ideas there. I do this all the time! For example, if you are using all white napkins with white or clear dishes, you can add some color to them by using jute string and tying a cinnamon stick and/or a dried orange slice around each folded napkin.

6





# ANOTHER TABLESCAPE IDEA

to get the links  
for these items,  
simply click  
on the photo. 







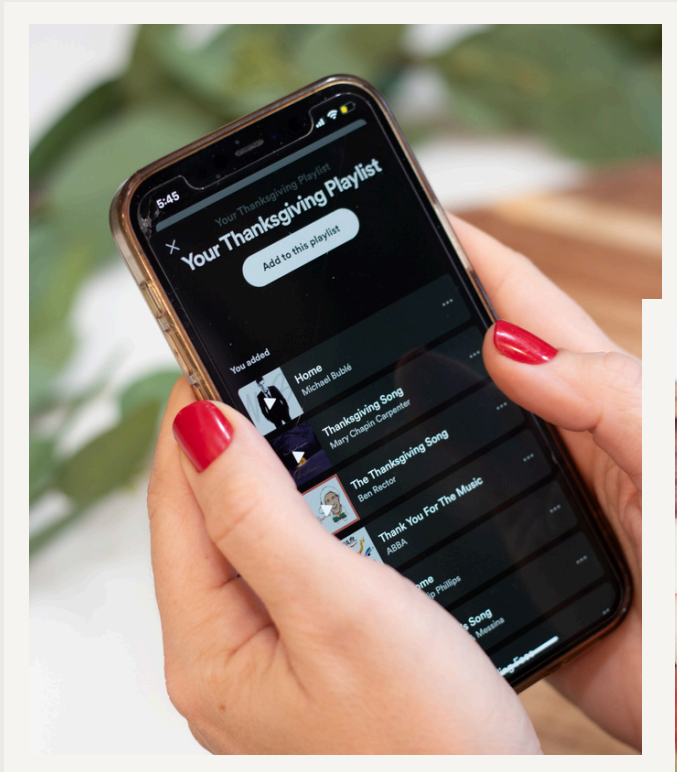
to get the links  
for these items,  
simply click  
on the photo.





# MUSIC & SIMMER POT

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*Nothing says nostalgia like a good smell and good music that is reserved for a specific time of the year. One of my goals around the holidays is to create nostalgia by bringing in the music, smells and ambiance for my children that turns it all into a full-blown experience. Enter November and my simmer pot with the delicious aroma of cinnamon, oranges and cloves is going non-stop as is my fall playlist that I don't listen to at any other time of year! This playlist also makes for great background music while entertaining your guests.*



Listen to my  
Thanksgiving  
spotify playlist:

[get it here](#)



A simmer pot is simple! Just fill any pot with water and set to simmer on low, then add your good smelling things. I love the one I have because it's small and doesn't take up much space.

I like to add:

- 3-4 slices of apple
- 3-4 slices of orange
- 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- 4 cinnamon sticks

I've also been known to add a splash of vanilla and some cranberries to change things up!

Simmer all day or until smell is gone, then change out for more!

[get links here](#)







# WHAT TO WEAR

*Whether you are dressing up or dressing down, here are a few ideas to help you decide what to wear!*



*to get the links  
for these items,  
simply click   
on the photo.*



to get the links for these items, simply click  on the photo.





# TRADITIONS & ACTIVITIES



*Part of creating nostalgia around the holidays means having certain activities that are done year after year, the Thanksgiving meal in and of itself being one of those activities. Below is a list of traditions I have crowdsourced to hopefully give you some ideas of things you can implement to add an element of fun around your Thanksgiving weekend!*

## **Thanksgiving themed Minute-to-win-it games**

### **Play a family game of football**

**Designate a particular tablecloth for your family Thanksgiving celebrations.**

**Provide fabric markers where guests can record their "gratitudes" or special prayers for the year ahead. Ask your guests to sign and date each message, as you'll be using the same tablecloth year after year.**

**Set up an area with paper, pens and colors for everyone to write thank you notes to someone who has blessed them in some way this year. They can thank family members, friends, or teachers. They can also write a thank you to God. Younger children can draw pictures. Let everyone who wishes read their notes aloud during the meal.**

**Play a fun game with the ABC's and thanks. Start with saying something that you are thankful for that starts with the letter "A" and go through all the letters of the alphabet. Have members take turns or have each person share a "thanks" for each letter.**

**A "thankful box" set out during the week of Thanksgiving or month of November with slips of paper next to it. Throughout the week/month everyone writes things they are thankful for and puts them in the box. On thanksgiving each person takes turns reading all the slips of paper.**

### **Turkey Trot/walk Thanksgiving morning**

**Scatter candy corn on the Thanksgiving table and during dinner everyone gathers up the pieces around them. For each piece they have they need to come up with something they're grateful for. For older kids a rule can be made that you can't repeat a blessing.**

**Host a "pie night" the night before Thanksgiving so everyone can enjoy pie and ice cream better than after a huge feast. Keep leftovers for after Thanksgiving dinner.**



