

## Things you should \*definitely\* make ahead .

### 1. Stuffing

"We always make my mom's sweet potato stuffing ahead of time. This can be made a week ahead and frozen, and the flavor still holds up, allowing you to save a ton of time day-of." - Leah Morrow, Executive Pastry Chef at the [Brooklyn Bread Lab](#)

"The flavor of stuffing is absolutely 100% better made ahead of time." - Ed McFarland, Owner/Chef of [Ed's Lobster Bar](#)

"Stuffing, definitely, so the flavors can all come together. But make sure to bake it the day of." - Carmine DiGiovanni, Executive Chef of [Aunt Jake's](#)

"Cornbread dressing. It takes half a day to make the cornbread just right, and then you let the mixed dressing sit overnight before you bake it. This helps all of the flavors come together."

"I would always say to make the stuffing ahead of time because it can be so time consuming. We make ours like a casserole. Make sure to cool it properly, pour into a 3-4" pan then top it with delicious extras like a bacon gremolata with lemon zest, and some brown bread crumbs with parmesan cheese. Everyone says that stuffing texture all tastes the same, so if you make it ahead of time and bake the day of, like a delicious lasagna so it's nice and crispy on top." - Tory McPhail, Chef at Commander's Palace

### 2. Casseroles

"Pretty much anything with 'casserole' in the name is built for being made in advance." - Molly Martin, Chef/Partner of [Juniper Green](#)

"Casseroles (classics like green bean or broccoli-cheddar) are great to make the day ahead. They reheat well, and I feel like they actually benefit from being made a day ahead, to give the flavors time to marinate!" - Tony Galzin, Chef/Owner of [Nicky's Coal Fired](#)

"Make green bean casserole ahead of time and place in the fridge, as the green beans gets to marinate in the cream of mushrooms the dish becomes more flavorful, you can also say the same about creamed onions. You can make this up to two days ahead of time. Then on Thanksgiving cover with crispy onions and bake." - Dave Anoaia, Chef/Owner of [DiAnoaia's Eatery](#)

### 3. Mise en place

"Any vegetables that you have to cut, even mirepoix, do it all on Monday. Example: if you're making a cauliflower purée, cut the cauliflower into manageable sized pieces, ready for boiling or roasting. Same with delicata squash; cut it to be ready for roasting. Cut all the mirepoix for the stuffing and gravy. If you're doing string beans, trim them. Also make all of your pie crusts and cranberry sauce ahead of time." - Laurence Edelman, Chef and Owner of [Left Bank](#)

"The mirepoix (celery, onions, and carrots) for stuffing can be made a day or two before the big day. Another trick of the trade is to blanch vegetables (green beans, brussels sprouts, etc.) and shock them in ice water this will help insure they do not take up a whole lot of time on Turkey Day." - Jeff Axline, Executive Chef of [Tavern at Bobby](#)

#### 4. Gravy

"Definitely make gravy ahead of time! I buy turkey backs and necks from the grocery store or butcher shop and roast them in the oven to make delicious turkey stock, and then I turn it into gravy well ahead of time; there is nothing worse than when you pull the turkey from the oven having to scramble around to get everything ready and make gravy on top of it. I will, however, cook up the gizzards the day of and add those to the gravy." - Katie Button, Executive Chef/Owner of Cúrate, Nightbell and soon-to-open Button & Co. Bagels

"Marinades, sauces, brines, etc. can all be made up to 4-5 days ahead and usually don't lose any quality. In many cases, flavors deepen and improve as they marry." - Molly Martin

"Making the gravy a day or two before allows all the flavors to settle and things to really have a chance to pack a flavor punch." - Greg Biggers, Chef/Owner of Fort Louise

#### 5. Most desserts

"You should also plan on making any dessert items at least one day before. Plan to make cakes, pies, and cookies (for example) that will hold up for a couple of days. This will relieve a lot of stress on the big day as well as keep your oven available for the turkey, rolls, and casseroles." - Jacqueline Blanchard, Owner of Coutelier

#### 6. Turkey and chicken stock

"Make it beforehand so it flavors every single thing you cook." - Linton Hopkins, Chef/Co-Owner Holeman & Finch, H&F Burger, C. Ellet's, Restaurant Eugene + Hop's Chicken

#### 7. Brussels Sprouts

"Brussels sprouts are worth making ahead. I blanch them in salted water, sauté them with onions and bacon, then set them aside afterwards which allows them to absorb those delicious flavors. When it is time to eat, I give them a final sauté with a little gravy to add complexity of flavor and velvety texture." - Nicolas Houlbert, Executive Chef at Bluebird London

### Things you should \*avoid\* making ahead.

#### 1. Rolls

"Rolls or other breads are not suited to be made ahead of time because they don't take to cooling and reheating as well." - Michael Brannock, Executive Chef at PDQ

## 2. Anything with fresh greens

"Things with fresh greens that will wilt and should never be made ahead." - Dianna Daoheung , Executive Chef of Black Seed Bagels

## 3. Cornbread

"For me cast iron skillet corn bread is a must for Thanksgiving, and nothing is better than cornbread straight out of the oven with honey butter on it. Cornbread is one of those dishes I would never make ahead of time. It loses its nice crunchy crust and hot moist insides if cooked ahead of time." -Greg Biggers

## 4. The turkey, or any other proteins

"Never make your turkey ahead of time! Reheating it can make it dried and it is the star of the show, so it has to be great." -Leah Morrow, Executive Pastry Chef at the Brooklyn Bread Lab

"When left sitting out or under refrigeration for a substantial amount of time, it can yield a very unappetizing texture." - Rick Bender, Chef/Partner of Local Leaf

"Things I wouldn't do ahead of time are proteins. I want to arrange my prep list so that the turkey is finishing its rest and I am pulling drippings out of the pan to make giblet gravy just as the other side dishes are hitting the table." - Michael Wilson, Executive Chef of Domenica

Proteins need to be made day of; they tend to dry out quickly and reheat with poor results." - Tony Galzin

Note: You're good to brine your turkey one to two days in advance. "This allows the turkey to absorb some of the water, so it gets more moist when it is cooked," says Nic Caicedo, Executive Chef of The Williamsburg Hotel. "Follow the brine with a marinade (fresh herbs, spices, sea salt and black pepper.)

*(Note: exception to "other proteins": Beef Tenderloin can be made ahead of time, refrigerated and set out an hour before and serve at room temperature, do not reheat, it will overcook)*

## 5. Mashed potatoes

"Mashed potatoes are a definite no-go on prepping ahead. They tend to get 'gluey' when reheated, and that's not good for anyone." - Jake Strang, Executive Chef of L27 Rooftop Lounge

"You should probably never make mashed potatoes ahead of time. They should be made at the moment, day-of, whipped just before everybody sits down to the meal." - Patrick Phelan, Co-Owner and Executive Chef of Longoven

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