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Homemakers' chat

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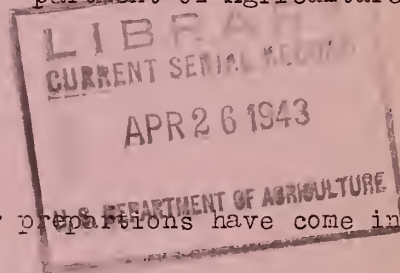
Wednesday, Nov. 25, 1942.

QUESTION BOX:

How make cranberry cocktail?
Prepare stuffing in advance?
How use giblets in gravy?
Cook fresh pumpkin for pie?
Wild nuts for Thanksgiving menus?

ANSWERS FROM:

Scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture



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So many questions about Thanksgiving dinner preparations have come in that here is a special question-and-answer day just to discuss these holiday food problems. The answers today come from home economists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The first question is about the appetizer to start the dinner: "I should like to serve some kind of colorful refreshing fruit appetizer before the hearty main course of my Thanksgiving dinner. Could I serve cranberry cocktail?"

Would it be too much cranberry if I had cranberry sauce, too?"

Cranberry cocktail would be an excellent choice for your first course, the home economists say. Whether or not you want cranberry sauce also is up to you. Might as well make some. It's more or less expected. To make cranberry cocktail, you cover the berries with 3 or 4 cups of water to each pound of cranberries, and cook until the berries are tender. Put them through a sieve or strain through a cheesecloth. Sweeten to taste, add a little salt, and dilute with water or ginger ale until the flavor suits you. Chill until time to serve.

One important point about making either cranberry sauce or cocktail -- be sure to look the berries over very carefully before you wash them and put them on to cook. Take out any soft or specked berries, or they will spoil the fine fruit flavor.

Next question: Is it all right to stuff the turkey the day before Thanks-

giving? I'd like to fix as many parts of the dinner as I can ahead of time."

The cookery specialists say: Yes, you can stuff your turkey today-- that is, the day before you cook it. The stuffing should be cold when you put it in. And you will have to keep the stuffed bird in the refrigerator or some very cold place overnight. Of course, both the turkey and the stuffing will be very cold when you take them out for roasting, so you will have to allow for extra time in the oven. Here's still another point to consider about stuffing the bird the day before. The seasoning in the stuffing has time overnight to flavor the flesh of the turkey. Some people like to have their turkey meat flavored with onion, sage and other seasonings this way; other prefer the natural flavor of the turkey.

One way to save time yet not actually stuff the turkey the day before is to make your stuffing the day before and keep it in a bowl in the refrigerator ready to go in the turkey first thing Thanksgiving morning.

From the stuffing let's turn to a question about the gravy. A housewife writes: "Please tell me the correct way to prepare giblets for giblet gravy."

Here's how. Wash all the giblets in cold water. As the gizzard and heart are less tender than the liver, they need longer cooking. So put them on the stove first--covered with lightly salted water, of course. If you put the neck of the turkey in to cook with them, the broth will have more turkey flavor. Simmer the heart, gizzard and neck about 2 hours. Then add the liver and continue to cook until all are tender. Grind or chop the giblets. Make your turkey gravy as you make gravy from any roast using the pan drippings from the turkey and using the giblet broth, add the chopped giblets last of all.

Now for the traditional dessert for the Thanksgiving dinner. Here's a letter from a housewife who has planned a pumpkin pie and now finds she can no longer buy canned pumpkin at her grocery store. She asks: "How can I prepare fresh pumpkin for pie?"

Cooking fresh pumpkin for pie is not difficult but it takes time. You have to take care to cook the pumpkin down so that it isn't too watery to make good custard. And in cooking it down so it is dry enough, you have to take care not to scorch it. To get all the fresh pumpkin flavor, pare the pumpkin and cut it in pieces. Boil the pieces in very little water until tender. Then press the pumpkin through a sieve. Now the sieved pumpkin needs cooking again. The place to do that and be sure of not scorching is in the upper part of the double boiler. Leave the lid off so the moisture can evaporate. When the pumpkin is nearly as dry as canned pumpkin, it's ready for pie. This is a long job, so today is a good day to get it done. Tomorrow you can make the pie.

Hubbard squash is sometimes used for pie, the same way pumpkin is used, and you have to dry it out the same way before making the pie filling. If you are already using the oven, you might bake the squash, and then scoop out the pulp, and it will be dry enough. But if you simmer the squash in water, you will need to cut off the rind and use the double boiler to evaporate the moisture as with pumpkin.

Our last question is about nuts. "We have lots of black walnuts and hickory nuts this year, that the children have gathered. I would like to use them at the end of the Thanksgiving dinner, but the kernels of both are so hard to get out. Is there any way to do this easily?"

Nut specialists of the Department say that if hickory nuts, butternuts, wild pecans and black walnuts are so dry that the kernel breaks up when you crack them, try soaking them overnight in warm water. Then drain and dry them for about an hour. This toughens them and they will crack more easily and the kernels will come out better. Hit hickory nuts and black walnuts on the edge when cracking them with a hammer. Crack butternuts on the end. Take the outside hulls off black walnuts as soon as they are gathered, by the way, and then wash and dry the nuts. If you leave the husks on they will discolor the kernels after a time. The soaking treatment is only for nuts that are to be used immediately. Once cracked, use the nuts up soon as they do not keep well. Dry nuts can be kept for a long time.

Well, there you have all the "fixin's" for your Thanksgiving dinner, from soup to nuts... or rather, from cranberry cocktail to nuts. Good luck to all your preparations!

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