



:: THANKSGIVING 2024 ::

Caramelized Pear Salad
Cheddar-Jalapeno Corn Pudding
Chocolate Cream Pie with Gingersnap Crust
Make-ahead Turkey
Roasted Acorn Squash with Sage Brown Butter, Hazelnuts and Raisins



CARAMELIZED PEAR SALAD

Serves 4-6

I say this every year - we all need a salad on our Thanksgiving menu! It adds freshness, color, and we can make it ahead. To keep easy, buy candied nuts or pumpkin seeds instead of making your own. Another option is to crush spicy cheese crackers and top the salad with that instead of cheese and/or candied pumpkin seeds. If you are behind schedule and don't have time to caramelize the pears, skip it and put them on the salad raw. Also delicious!

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5 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided (can use part walnut oil for the dressing)

1 pound Bartlett pears (about 2 medium), quartered lengthwise and cored

Sea salt or kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3 Tablespoons apple cider vinegar, red wine vinegar, white wine vinegar, or sherry vinegar, divided

½ cup shelled pumpkin seeds

2 Tablespoons cane sugar

2 teaspoons maple syrup, agave, or honey

1 (9-ounce) head of frisée and some arugula (or use butter lettuce)

2/3 cup crumbled blue cheese or shaved Manchego or feta (or vegan cheese or sub avocado)

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1. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1 Tablespoon of oil until just shimmering. Add pears in a single layer cut side down, season with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Flip when golden and cook until the second side is golden, 4 to 6 minutes total.
2. Reduce heat to low and add 1 Tablespoon of vinegar. Gently stir until liquid is thickened and coats pears, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer pears to a plate and let cool. Halve each piece of pear lengthwise. You can do this a few hours ahead.
3. Wipe the skillet clean and heat over medium-high heat. Toast pumpkin seeds, stirring frequently, until fragrant and just starting to brown and pop, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer to another plate and let cool.
4. In the same skillet over medium heat, pour in sugar, shaking the pan so it settles in an even layer. Cook, undisturbed, until sugar melts and is deep golden brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Remove from heat. Using a heat proof spatula, stir in pumpkin seeds and 1/4 teaspoon salt. When pumpkin seeds clump together with sugar, transfer to a plate and let sit until cool enough to handle. Break into small, bite-sized pieces.
5. In a large bowl, whisk maple syrup and remaining 4 tablespoons oil and 2 tablespoons vinegar; season with salt and pepper. Fold in greens, gently tossing to combine; season again with salt and pepper, if needed. Top with pear slices, candied pumpkin seeds, and cheese.



CHEDDAR-JALAPENO CORN PUDDING

Serves 8

Every year I make cornbread for Thanksgiving and even though it's delicious, it's never that popular. THIS corn pudding is like cornbread meets a souffle and is much more interesting and flavorful than boring cornbread. It has replaced cornbread on my Thanksgiving menu permanently! It's easy and flexible and tastes amazing with turkey. I have made basic corn pudding before and I think this one is much more exciting!

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10 TBS unsalted butter or plant butter (1 stick + 2 TBS) + additional for greasing the baking dish

½ yellow onion, diced

4 ½ cups corn kernels, fresh or frozen/thawed

1 jalapeno, seeded and diced

1 ½ teaspoons sea salt, divided

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

1 cup whole milk unsweetened, plain Greek yogurt or sour cream or a combo of both

½ whole milk or unsweetened, plain plant milk (I used soy milk.)

2 large eggs

⅔ cup all-purpose flour or GF flour blend

½ cup cornmeal

¼ cup granulated cane sugar or maple sugar

1 Tablespoon aluminum-free baking powder

½ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese plus more for sprinkling, if desired

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1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease a 2-quart baking dish with butter and set aside. I used a gratin dish.
2. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and saute until tender and translucent, about 5-6 minutes. Add the corn, jalapeno, ¾ teaspoon of salt and black pepper to taste. Saute until just tender and no longer raw, about 4-5 minutes. Remove pan from the heat.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the yogurt, milk, and eggs until combined. Add in the flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder, and ½ teaspoon salt. Stir until almost combined. Add the corn mixture and the cheese and stir until just combined.
4. Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and sprinkle the top with more cheese if you like. Bake for 45 minutes, or until the center is set and the top is golden brown.
5. Leftovers are good for up to 5 days in the fridge. Reheat in the microwave or in the oven at 350 until warmed through.



Make it dairy-free: Use plant butter like Myoko's or Melt. Use DF sour cream and a rich plant milk like soy or cashew. Use vegan cheese or omit.

Make it GF: use a good GF flour blend.

Make it egg-free: sub 6 TBS aquafaba whipped with ½ teaspoon crema of tartar. Fold into batter.



CHOCOLATE CREAM PIE WITH GINGERSNAP CRUST

Serves 8

I used to write in my post-Thanksgiving notes every year that “we need a chocolate option!” And sure enough, I was right. It’s nice to have apple and pumpkin, but chocolate always rounds out the mix. This is a super easy pie and you can also do this with a pre-baked chocolate wafer crust or an Oreo cookie crust. I always make this the day before and top with the extra whipped cream just before serving.

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For the crust

¼ cup unsalted butter or plant butter, melted

8 ounces gingersnap cookies (I used 47 Trader Joe’s triple ginger cookies)

OPTIONAL: ¼ cup chopped crystallized ginger (sub ¼ tsp ground ginger if necessary)

For the filling

8 ounces 60% bittersweet baking pieces (don’t use cheap chocolate chips or ones with fake sweeteners)

⅓ cup water

2 Tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder

1 Tablespoon granulated cane sugar

⅛ teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt

1 Tablespoon pure vanilla extract

1 ½ cups heavy whipping cream, whipped to stiff peaks (not chunky though)

Garnish

Optional: whipped cream for serving plus shaved chocolate

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1. Make the crust: Preheat the oven to 350. In a small heatproof bowl set on top of a saucepan of simmering water, melt the butter.
2. In the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade, add the gingersnaps and pulse a few times to break them into small pieces. Add the candied ginger and pulse a few more times. Add the butter mixture and pulse again until everything is combined well.
3. Empty the crumb mixture into a 9-inch pie plate. Spread the mixture around evenly and press firmly. I use a metal measuring cup.
4. Bake the crust for 10 minutes. Allow to cool completely before making the filling.
5. Make the filling: Place the chocolate pieces, water, cocoa powder, sugar, and salt in a large bowl and microwave in 30-second increments, stirring, for 1-2 minutes or until melted and smooth. Stir in the vanilla.



6. Fold the whipped cream into the chocolate mixture with a spatula until combined. Transfer the filling into the prepared crust and refrigerate at least 2 hours but preferably longer, like overnight.
7. Optional: top with additional whipped cream and chocolate shavings.

Make it vegan: swap in a tub of defrosted CocoWhip or TruWhip for the whipped cream and do not add additional sugar.



MAKE AHEAD TURKEY

Yes, it can be done. You can make a turkey earlier in the day or the day before and reheat it and everyone will love it. The key is adding HOT stock to the carved turkey and reheating it that way. The only tricky part is the skin won't be crackly crisp, but something's got to give. Another option for smaller amounts of turkey (like a turkey breast) is to roast in oven and allow to stay warm in a slow cooker on the WARM setting for several hours.

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1 pre-cooked turkey

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1. After turkey is finished roasting, remove from oven and allow turkey to rest 30 minutes, covered.
2. Carve but keep pieces together in a baking dish or roasting pan with high sides.
3. Allow to cool a little longer, up to an hour. Cover with plastic wrap directly on the turkey and cover the dish with foil or a lid and refrigerate overnight. Make the gravy and refrigerate until the next day.
4. When you want to eat, remove from fridge 30-45 minutes ahead.
5. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
6. Uncover and separate the slices slightly, pour 1-2 cups hot turkey or chicken stock in the pan.
7. Cover and heat through, about 30 minutes.
8. Transfer the turkey slices to your platter (nice if it's warmed) with a long spatula.
9. While turkey is reheating, reheat the gravy on the stove over medium-low heat.



ROASTED ACORN SQUASH WITH SAGE BROWN BUTTER, HAZELNUTS, AND RAISINS

Serves 6

I did not expect to love this dish as much as I did. The sage brown butter is unbelievable and would be amazing on any winter squash or root vegetable. Plus it's so easy! One of the reasons I love acorn squash is that the prep is pretty quick - no peeling necessary since you can eat the skin. On Thanksgiving, I always roast my vegetables early (2 hours) and then consolidate them onto one sheet pan and reheat in a 375 degree oven until heated through.

2 medium-sized Acorn squash, halved, seeds removed, and cut into ¾ -inch slices or wedges

2 Tablespoons olive oil or coconut oil or avocado oil

2 Tablespoons maple syrup

Salt and pepper to taste

4 Tablespoons unsalted butter or plant butter

4-5 fresh sage leaves or 6-8 smaller sage leaves

¼ cup chopped skinned hazelnuts

¼ cup golden raisins or chopped pitted dates

1. To roast the squash: Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Line two half sheet pans or one ¾ sheet pan with unbleached parchment paper.
2. Halve squash lengthwise, then cut off and discard stem ends. Scoop out seeds and cut squash crosswise (for a pretty scalloped edge) or lengthwise into ¾-inch wide wedges.
3. Toss squash with 2 Tablespoons oil and syrup in a bowl then arrange cut sides down on prepared pans. Sprinkle with ¾ teaspoon salt and black pepper to taste.
4. Roast squash, switching position of pans halfway through roasting, until squash is tender and undersides of wedges are golden brown, 25 to 35 minutes.
5. While the squash is roasting, make the brown butter sauce. Melt the butter in a medium skillet over medium-low heat. Cook until the milk solids at the bottom are barely golden. Add the sage leaves then continue cooking, stirring frequently, until the butter is golden brown and fragrant, about 3 minutes. Turn off the heat, add in the chopped hazelnuts and golden raisins, continue stirring for another minute to ensure that the butter doesn't burn. Season with a pinch of salt.
6. Arrange the roasted squash on a large platter and spoon the warm brown butter, sage, hazelnuts, and raisins over top. Serve immediately!