

THANKSGIVING LEFTOVERS

One of the great things about Thanksgiving is lots of leftovers. One of the not so good things about Thanksgiving is lots of leftovers. I'm one of those who loves the leftovers for the next day but then run out of gas eating them a second day. Go online and you'll find lots of ideas for using leftovers, but I confess that many of them seem contrived.

The tried and true of course is a fat turkey sandwich with toasted bread, slices of turkey, cranberry sauce and gravy or mayonnaise. You could even slide a little stuffing or sliced brie in along with some crisp romaine lettuce. I'll bet most of you have your fav.

Here are some ideas that I've done over the years:

TURKEY POT PIE

Serves 4 – 6

A pot pie shouldn't have to take all day. Pie dough is delicious but a little time consuming. Using a sheet of store-bought puff pastry makes quick work for the lid. My favorite is Dufour's brand. Make sure the filling is boiling before you add the puff pastry. This is the key to getting a fully cooked and not soggy crust.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2-1/2 cups of so leftover vegetables cut into relatively uniform 1/2 inch cubes
2 cups turkey or chicken broth
1/2 cup heavy cream
3 cups chopped cooked turkey
1 teaspoon fresh thyme
1/2 teaspoon crushed fennel seed
1 sheet thawed frozen puff pastry (1/2 of a 17.3 package)
Preheat oven to 425°F.

Melt butter in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high. Stir in flour until smooth. Stir in vegetables, broth, cream, turkey, thyme and fennel and bring to a boil.

Remove from heat, and place pastry sheet over top of skillet.

Bake in preheated oven until golden brown and bubbling, about 18 minutes.



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MEXICAN TURKEY NOODLE SOUP

Serves 6

This is a riff on the Mexican soup *Sopa de Fideo*. Fideo means noodle, usually used in the plural fideos to mean vermicelli. Fideo noodles, a type of thin, cut pasta, are traditionally used. Vermicelli or angel hair often substituted. Special Fideo noodles are sold at most Latin/Mexican grocery stores.

Like most pastas, they are made of durum wheat and water, rolled or extruded, cut and dried. But fideos are usually prepared quite differently than Italian-style pasta in that the dry pasta is first toasted in olive oil. This is a very easy recipe.

One 15-ounce can diced tomatoes, undrained preferable fire roasted
1-1/2 cups chopped onion
2 large cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
2 teaspoons dried oregano, preferably Mexican
1 teaspoon chopped canned chipotle, or more to taste
1 teaspoon brown sugar
2 tablespoons olive oil
6 ounces dried fideos or angel hair pasta, broken into 1" pieces

6 cups turkey or chicken stock

3 cups cooked, diced or shredded turkey

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Garnishes: Chopped diced avocado, crumbled queso fresco, finely chopped white onion, cilantro sprigs

In a food processor, combine the tomatoes, onion, garlic, oregano, chipotle and sugar. Process until smooth.

In a heavy soup pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the dry pasta and cook, stirring occasionally, until the pasta starts to turn golden, about 5 minutes.

Add the tomato mixture and the chicken stock. Increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Cook, uncovered, until the pasta is al dente, about 5 minutes.

Add the turkey and heat thru. Season to your taste with salt and pepper.

Ladle the soup into 6 bowls and encourage eaters to add garnishes to their taste.



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MACARONI AND CHEESE FRITTERS

Makes 14 or so

I make big batches of macaroni and cheese to have leftovers to make this delicious little bite. Mac and cheese is a staple on many Thanksgiving tables. Serve these with your favorite dipping sauce like marinara. The variations are infinite. Add some crumbled bacon, chopped jalapeno or cooked vegetables to the mac and cheese mixture before breading. Also put a small chunk of ham or cheese in the center of each fritter before breading.

3 cups canola or vegetable oil, for frying
3 cups leftover cold macaroni and cheese, cold
2 large eggs
1 cup or so panko breadcrumbs

Heat the oil in a deep, heavy saucepan to about 360 F, or until a cube of bread browns in about 30 seconds.

Shape the cold macaroni and cheese into small 1-1/2-inch balls. Be sure they are well chilled.

In a shallow bowl, beat the eggs with a tablespoon of water. Dip the chilled mac and cheese balls into the beaten eggs, drain and then roll in breadcrumbs. They can be made ahead at this point and refrigerated uncovered for a couple of hours

Drop carefully into the hot oil being sure not to crowd. Cook, turning, until golden brown, about 3 minutes.

Drain on paper towels to drain; keep warm in a 200° oven while frying subsequent batches.

TURKEY TETRAZZINI

Serves 4 – 6

This dish purportedly was named for Luisa Tetrazzini, an Italian soprano who was popular in America in the early 1900's. Beautifully plump, she once said, "I must not diet. If I diet my face sag". She loved rich pasta with chicken or turkey and mushrooms and this dish was created for her by an unknown chef. All kinds of variations exist including adding peas, toasted slivered almonds and more. This is a wonderful dish to make with leftover Thanksgiving turkey.

4 cups (about 12 ounces) sliced button or cremini mushrooms
6 tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
2 cups rich turkey or chicken stock
1 cup heavy cream

3 – 4 tablespoons medium dry sherry such as amontillado
1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1/2-pound dry cavatelli or pennette pasta
3 – 4 cups chopped or shredded Thanksgiving turkey
1/2 cup freshly grated parmesan or other hard grating cheese
1/3 cup dry breadcrumbs, panko preferred

Sauté the mushrooms in 2 tablespoons of the butter in a heavy 4-quart saucepan until lightly browned and all liquid has evaporated. Set pan and mushrooms aside.

Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a small saucepan over moderate heat. Add flour and cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes to make a roux. Gradually whisk in the broth, cream and sherry. Bring sauce to a boil and then reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes, whisking the whole time. Stir in the nutmeg and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Meanwhile cook the pasta in boiling salted water until al dente. Drain well. Stir half the sauce into the turkey and the other half into the mushrooms along with the pasta. Transfer mixture to a buttered 8 cup baking dish or casserole and make a well in the center. Spoon turkey mixture into the well.

Combine the parmesan with the breadcrumbs and sprinkle evenly over the top along with the remaining tablespoon of butter cut into small bits. Bake in a preheated 375° oven for 30 minutes or so or until bubbling and top is lightly golden brown.

RISOTTO WITH BRUSSELS SPROUTS, ROASTED GARLIC AND LEMON

Serves 6

Risottos are wonderful “comfort foods”. The key is to make sure that when the risotto gets to that magic place when each grain of rice is soft and creamy on the exterior but still with a little texture in the very center, serve it up immediately. That’s why it’s one of those things to do with everyone already in the kitchen, bowls at hand, sharing a glass of wine, gossiping, etc. This is a great use of those Brussels sprout you’ve carefully browned so make extra to do this risotto. Even better if you’ve finished them with crispy bacon or pancetta.

3 tablespoons butter
1/4 cup sliced shallots
1-1/2 cups Arborio rice
1 cup sliced shiitake or cremini mushrooms
3 tablespoons chopped roasted garlic*
1/2 cup dry white wine
5 - 6 cups hot vegetable or chicken stock
1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan or Asiago cheese
1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest
3 cups chopped cooked Brussels sprouts

2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Drops of fresh lemon juice to taste

Garnish: Additional Parmesan shaved and deep-fried basil sprigs, if desired

Melt butter in a deep, heavy bottomed saucepan. Add shallots and cook over moderate heat until soft, not brown. Add rice and shiitakes and cook, stirring often until rice is translucent, about 3 minutes.

Add garlic, wine and enough stock to cover rice mixture and cook stirring constantly until liquid is nearly absorbed. Continue adding hot stock in this manner stirring all the time and letting the rice absorb the stock before adding more. Begin testing rice after about 12 minutes. You're looking for the rice to be creamy and not gummy. The center of each rice grain should still have some texture and bite (al dente). This will take 16 – 18 minutes total. Stir in the cooked Brussels and cook for a minute or two longer. Then stir in the zest, chives and cheese and season to your taste with salt, pepper and drops of lemon juice. Serve in warm bowls garnished with shaved Parmesan and fried basil if using.

*To roast garlic: Slice off the top quarter or so of each garlic head to expose the cloves. Drizzle with a little olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Loosely but completely wrap each head in a piece of foil and roast in a preheated 400° oven or until garlic is very soft and lightly browned, about 45 minutes or so. Cool, and store well covered in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.



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TURKEY AND WAFFLES

Serves 4

This assumes you have good leftover gravy so be sure to make lots. You could also add some quickly sauteed spinach to this simple recipe.

2 tablespoons butter
2 cups diced cremini mushrooms
Dry white vermouth or white wine
3 cups leftover turkey gravy
Salt and freshly ground pepper
4 homemade or store-bought waffles
Slices of turkey both white and dark meat
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese to garnish

Heat a deep saucepan, add the butter and sauté the mushrooms over moderate heat until lightly browned. Add a splash of white vermouth and the gravy. Bring to a simmer and season to your taste with salt and pepper.

Place waffles on warm plates and top with turkey. Spoon gravy over and sprinkle parmesan cheese over. Serve immediately.



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LEFTOVER CRANBERRY SAUCE CRISP

Serves 4 to 6 in a 2-quart baking dish

Crisps are classic comfort food and so easy to make out of most any available fruit. In this case I'm using cranberry sauce. You'll need at least 4 cups. Yes, you can use canned sauce too. It'll take four 14-ounce cans of whole cranberry sauce. Don't use jellied. Serve warm or room temperature with ice cream or lightly sweetened whipped cream if you like

For the topping:

1/2 cup dark brown sugar

1/2 cup old fashioned rolled oats (not instant)

1/3 cup toasted pecans, chopped

1/4 cup flour

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest (use a micro plane)

3 ounces butter (3/4 stick) chilled and cut into 1/4" bits, plus more for buttering dish

In a bowl, mix the sugar, oats, pecans, all but 1 tablespoon flour, salt and zest together. With a hand mixer, food processor or with your fingertips, quickly mix butter bits into sugar mixture to form a coarse meal. Mixture should be loose and crumbly, work quickly to avoid softening the butter. Refrigerate while preparing the filling.

For the filling:

5 cups or so homemade or canned cranberry sauce

1/3 cup fresh orange juice

2 teaspoon grated orange zest

Pinch of salt

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Warm the filling ingredients in a saucepan. Pour into a buttered 2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle topping evenly over the top. Bake until top is lightly browned and cranberries are bubbling, about 35 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.

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