

101  
WAYS  
TO MAKE

THANKSGIVING  
EASIER (WE KID  
YOU NOT!)

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IN TASTY  
BITE-SIZE  
PORTIONS





# 1-16 WOW!

## A THANKSGIVING CALENDAR YOU CAN REALLY USE

*Magazines live for holiday countdowns. We like 'em, too, but decided that some common tips needed a reality check.*

REAL-LIFE

*The Ultimate Countdown to Thanksgiving*

# NOVEMBER 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				30	31	
2		4		6	7	8
	10		12			
16	17			20		
		25				
				29		

Place an order with your local bakery for a made-from-scratch ready-to-bake pie. (Throw it in the oven once the turkey's ready to carve—it'll make your whole house smell like homemade pie.)

There's no need for a fresh bird with all the **great frozen options** (see tips 22 to 24). Plus, you should remember your vegetarian guests. Plan your side dishes accordingly now.

**Radical thought:** Serve buffet-style.

Yeah, if you love jacked-up preholiday prices. **Next time**, buy all nonperishable ingredients on sale after Thanksgiving.

**Genius idea:** Make sure your equipment works. Does your standing mixer still blow a fuse? Is your meat thermometer on the fritz?

Shop for bagged stuffing. Make a clear cooking schedule today including freezing in advance.

Pull out the fancy serving pieces and match with each dish.

Ask Uncle Stanley to bring folding chairs.

Polish the silver, iron the linens!

Remind guests what they're bringing.

Have the kids clean up.

Make fresh mushroom stuffing, double stuffed sweet potatoes (and mashed!), cranberry sauce...

First thing a.m.: Thaw frozen dishes.

What the heck am I wearing?!  
Decorate?

Get yourself a set of cool-looking seal-and-stack casserole dishes that go straight from the oven to the table and back again.

See the 17th. You've just saved yourself from a sleepless night.

Edyta Pawlowska/Stockphoto, Counter-clockwise: Turkey Eric Isselee/Stockphoto, Place card holder aren't.../Stockphoto, Thermometer Martin McCarthy/Stockphoto, Cell phone Daniel Skrow/Stockphoto



**Make the Big Meal Easier on Your Waistline**

We streamlined Turkey Day staples without sacrificing flavor.

**17 MASHED POTATOES** Whip in the *other* white vegetable: cauliflower. Use a ratio of 1/3 pureed cauliflower to 2/3 spuds, and you'll add fiber so you're fuller faster.

**18 STUFFING** Slash the calories in this carbolicious dish without shrinking portion size: Just add prewashed spinach to the mix.

**19 SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE** This quintessential Thanksgiving side dish is usually topped with mini marshmallows. Swap those for canned pineapple chunks. You'll get the sugar rush minus the empty calories.

**20 PUMPKIN PIE** Don't invite the yolks! Add an extra egg white or two to hold the custard together while still keeping things creamy.

**21 WHIPPED CREAM** Dollop nonfat Greek-style yogurt instead of heavy cream on your dessert. Just whisk in pure vanilla extract and a pinch of sugar!

**Talkin' (Frozen) Turkey**

Get this: Sixty-nine percent of people buy their birds frozen. So says a poll by the National Turkey Federation. But your basic Butterballs aren't the only ones on the block. We size up three labels to see which birds are really worth their weight.

**22. "All-Natural"** At its best, this label means the bird has no added colorings or artificial ingredients. At its worst, it's a marketing gimmick.

**23. "USDA Organic"** This seal means the antibiotic-free bird was fed an organic diet and had free-range access. Translation: healthier turkey.

**24. "Kosher"** This bird is pre-brined, making it the juiciest of the bunch. So it's flavorful and moist—even the day after.

**25 Buy This...** **Turkey Baster.** It's got access to places a spoon could only dream of going. Its long reach and strong suction can quickly draw up the pan juices from the bottom of the roaster without splashing.

**26 And That...** **Potato Masher.** This trusty handheld tool won't turn your spuds to paste, as food processors and electric mixers tend to do.

**27 And This One, Too...** **Gravy Separator.** This nifty pitcher draws the natural meat juices from below the fatty surface every time you pour.

**28 READER TIP** **WHEN MY KIDS WERE LITTLE, I CREATED A "CLEAN-UP JAR." BEFORE DESSERT, THEY'D EACH STICK A HAND IN TO FIND OUT IF THEY WERE CLEARING GLASSES, SCRAPING PLATES OR WASHING DISHES. I'D ALSO THROW IN A SURPRISE LIKE, "YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING!"**

—IRENE BOFFO, Fountain Hills, AZ

**NOTE TO SELF: SIZE MATTERS**

What size bird do you really need? One pound raw weight per person is the rule of thumb. But when in doubt, buy up. Keep in mind that bigger birds have a higher proportion of dark meat. So if you're entertaining a crowd of white-meat lovers, you may want to stick with an average-size turkey and roast a couple of extra breasts on the side.



**30**

**GET YOUR FRIDGE READY.** Sit your bird in a sturdy pan that won't leak and cross-contaminate other foods.

**TAKE DEFROSTING OUT OF THE ICE AGE**

**31 KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.** Marinate your turkey during its last three hours of defrosting time. That's when it's supple and ready to soak up whatever seasonings your heart desires, be it soy sauce and ginger or lemon, olive oil and herbs.

**32 GIVE IT A BRINING BATH.** That's 1 1/2 cups kosher salt dissolved in 2 gallons of cold tap water. Change the brine every 30 minutes. We tried this in our test kitchen with a 16-pounder—and shaved the thaw time from seven hours to four!

**NO ROOM IN THERE?** No problem. Let your turkey chill with the cool crowd. Replicate fridge-like conditions and thaw it in an ice-filled beer cooler.

**33 FINISH OFF THE JOB IN THE MICROWAVE.** If your bird's still partially frozen come roasting time, cut off the leg/thigh portion, microwave the white and dark meat separately, then lean them right back on the body before roasting.

**35 READER TIP** **KEEP IT SIMPLE! MOST OF MY FRIENDS ARE WEIGHT-CONSCIOUS: NOT OFFERING A THOUSAND CHOICES HELPS THEM AND MY BUDGET.**

—LARRY BRIMNER, Tucson, AZ

**Get Organized**

- 36. Clear your counters, clear your mind.** Now's no time for space hogs like toasters. Store away all but the two or three appliances your Thanksgiving recipes call for.
- 37. Get your fridge into fighting shape.** Purge the shelves and inner doors of almost-empty jars and bottles, and leftover takeout.
- 38. Cook what you know.** Using your guests as guinea pigs for brand new recipes will only add more stress.
- 39. Post your menu on the fridge.** Professional chefs swear by this simple trick. It helps you focus on the big picture and the tasks at hand.
- 40. Dress for the occasion.** It's amazing what an apron can do to get you in the mood for a day of cooking. And don't forget the supportive, comfy shoes!

ICE STYLING BY BRIAN BYRNE.

**teach whipped cream new tricks**

- 41. MINT WHIPPED CREAM** 1 cup heavy cream + 1 teaspoon granulated sugar + 2 tablespoons melted mint jelly
- 42. MAPLE WHIPPED CREAM** 1 cup heavy cream + 1 tablespoon pure maple syrup + 1 pinch nutmeg + 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 43. BUTTERSCOTCH WHIPPED CREAM** 1 cup heavy cream + 2 tablespoons butterscotch pudding powder
- 44. APPLE WHIPPED CREAM** 1 cup heavy cream + 1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract + 2 tablespoons cider syrup reduced from 1 cup apple cider
- 45. ORANGESICLE WHIPPED CREAM** 1 cup heavy cream + 1 tablespoon Grand Marnier + 1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

**READER TIP** **THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, I FREEZE ASSORTED BREAD ENDS IN A HUGE RESEALABLE BAG. BY THANKSGIVING, I HAVE THE BASE OF MY STUFFING.**

—SUSAN ROWLEY, Bath, NH

**46**



## Hey! Look Over Here for Cool Shortcuts!

**47. Turn frozen winter squash into a rich first course.** Just simmer with broth and applesauce, adding a little cream before serving. Soup's on in about 10 minutes.

saved: **1 hour**

**48. Feel free to nuke.** While the stove and oven are working overtime, divert traffic to their speedy little cousin. It'll shave cook time off potatoes, root veggies and squash.

saved: **45 min.**

**49. Buy premade graham cracker crust.** It gives classic pumpkin, apple or pecan pie a crunchy cookie-crumb twist and requires no prebaking.

saved: **20 min.**

**50. Put the "cut" in shortcuts.** Roasting turkey parts can slash the cooking time by half, and you may just avoid the family argument over who gets the white meat.

saved: **2 hours**

**51. Make a house cocktail.** Why play bartender all evening? Serve a signature mix in a pitcher and ask guests to help themselves.

saved: **time to enjoy a cocktail, too!**

## MILESTONES

*They say the only constant in life is change. So here's how to mark the special day if...*



**52. IT'S YOUR FIRST THANKSGIVING AS HOSTESS.** Don't try to conform to holidays of the past. Get one or two aspects of entertaining under your belt—no need to perfect the tradition the first time around.

**53. YOUR FATHER'S BRINGING HIS NEW WIFE.** Do your homework. Ask for a recipe from her side of the family. Serve it in honor of your new guest.



**54. A REGULAR GUEST IS NOTICEABLY ABSENT.** Don't ignore the loss. Start a tradition of recognizing those who couldn't share your table this year. Have tissues handy.



**55. YOU'VE HOSTED MORE THANKSGIVINGS THAN YOU CAN BEAR.** Pass the torch before the flame goes out. Gift wrap your Turkey Day recipe book and hand it to your sibling with a note: "Next year at your house!"

**READER TIP**

**I NEVER TURN DOWN A VOLUNTEER. WHEN GUESTS ASK, "HOW CAN I HELP?" I TAKE THEM UP ON IT!**

—BAMBI VOIGHT, Hoboken, NJ

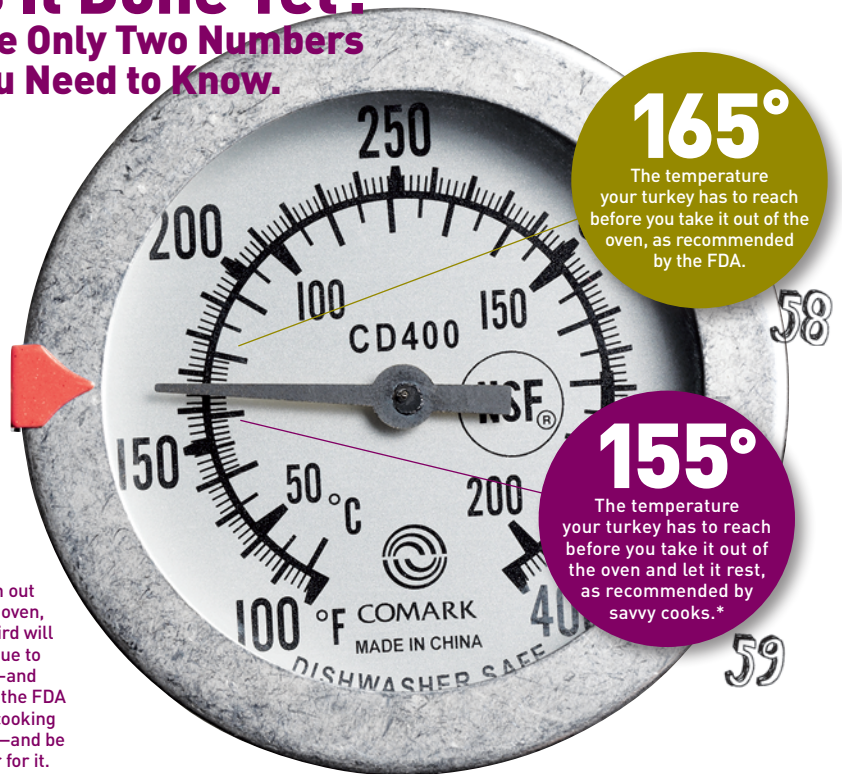
**57**

**READER TIP**

**SETTING THE DINING ROOM TABLE AHEAD MEANS ONE LESS THING TO DO ON THE BIG DAY, AND IT GIVES ME TIME TO TWEAK ANY TABLE DECORATIONS.**

—KATHLEEN HOY, Sonoma, CA

## Is It Done Yet? The Only Two Numbers You Need to Know.



**165°**

The temperature your turkey has to reach before you take it out of the oven, as recommended by the FDA.

**155°**

The temperature your turkey has to reach before you take it out of the oven and let it rest, as recommended by savvy cooks.\*

\*Even out of the oven, that bird will continue to cook—and reach the FDA safe-cooking temp—and be juicier for it.

### WHAT TO STUFF BESIDES THE BIRD



60 BELL PEPPERS

61 MUSHROOM CAPS

62 ACORN SQUASH

63 TOMATOES

64 ZUCCHINI



# BASTING MADE EASY

Take your pick of moistening methods.

65

Give the bird a one-time greasing, then roast without peeking. The more you open the oven door, the longer the turkey takes to cook!

66

Don't want to get your hands dirty? Drape the bird with butter-soaked cheesecloth. The butter will baste the bird as it roasts, saving you the hassle.

67

Begin roasting the turkey breast side down, then, halfway through cooking time, turn the bird upright. Gravity helps the fattier dark meat moisten the breast.

68

Butter your turkey under the skin before it goes in the oven. The melted butter trapped between the meat and the skin will have plenty of time to flavor your bird.

69

Baste with a mixture of butter and wine for an unconventional, buttery gobble with a tangy kick.

## Stop Trouble Before It Starts

**70. Dry turkey meat** Give it a rest! Don't carve your turkey unless it's had at least 20 minutes to sit out of the oven. This allows the juices to recede back into the meat. Dig in too soon, and those juices that make for a moist turkey will be lost to the cutting board.

**71. Overcooked vegetables** Boiling and baking usually come on way too strong for veggies. Instead, steam them until they're crisp-tender. For instance, 1 pound of steamed string beans should take about 4 minutes.

**72. Lumpy gravy** This usually happens when you don't whisk carefully enough. When you're short on patience, keep things smooth by using Wondra flour, which is designed to dissolve into liquid.

**73. Gluey mashed potatoes** To avoid ending up with a side dish Elmer's could bottle, don't paddle your potatoes on high speed in the mixer, and avoid the food processor altogether. For best results, mash 'em by hand.



## instant apps

Because the smell of roasting turkey can turn even the most polite guest into a whining 5-year-old, buy some time with these crowd-pleasers. They'll whet (without ruining) everyone's appetite.

### 82. Dressed Goat Cheese Rounds

Slice an 11-ounce goat cheese log into 6 rounds. Lay flat on a serving plate and drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil. Sprinkle 2 rounds with herbs de Provence and crushed red pepper, another 2 rounds with chopped pecans and the remaining 2 rounds with chopped sun-dried tomatoes. Serve with toasted baguette slices.



### 83. Crab Cocktail Dip

Spread 1 pound of softened cream cheese in a 5-by-9-inch baking dish. Layer with 1 pound of lump crabmeat and 1 cup of cocktail sauce. Sprinkle with chives and serve with crackers.



### 84. Bacon-and-Bean Spread

Crumble 4 slices cooked bacon. In a food processor, finely chop 3 garlic cloves and a handful of flat-leaf parsley. Add two 15-ounce cans of rinsed cannellini beans; with the machine running, pour in 1/4 cup of extra-virgin olive oil. Stir in the bacon. Serve with pita chips.

**85. READER TIP**  
I SIDESTEP THE IRONING BOARD ENTIRELY AND IRON MY TABLECLOTH DIRECTLY ON A PADDED TABLE.

—SARAH ZORN, Brooklyn, NY

## Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

If you're anything like us, you're expecting a motley crew. Here's how to put every character in the right place.



**74. THE HOSTESS**

sits at the head of the table, closest to the kitchen. It's the shortest distance to the stove (and offers a quick escape).

**75. THE NOSTALGIC BLABBERMOUTH**

lives in the past. Seat this guest near someone with a tolerance for the same old stories.

**76. THE ABSENTMINDED SENIOR**

has been a part of many of the Nostalgic Blabbermouth's tales. Tonight he hasn't turned on his hearing aid.

**77. THE LIFE OF THE PARTY**

always sees the glass as half-full. She'll be happy wherever she sits!

78

**THE QUIET ONE**

(perhaps in the form of a daughter's new boyfriend) gets vicarious pleasure from extroverts.

79

**THE COOL AUNT**

easily gains trust. Compares tattoos with teenagers and shares their enthusiasm for My Chemical Romance.

80

**THE BROODING TEENAGER**

won't fail to criticize the meal, so is seated out of earshot of the hostess. Fantasizes about being on *Iron Chef America*.

81

**THE GRATEFUL NEIGHBOR**

is always jumping to help serve and clear. (Beware—he's also a bit of a klutz when it comes to the good china.)

## Roasting-Pan Cleanup

Don't want to wrestle with the greasiest thing on earth? Do one of these:

**87.** While dinner's being served, add soapy water to the roaster and stick it in a 250° oven. By the time the guests have gone, the soak will make scrubbing a cinch.

**88.** Add water and soap, bring the pan to a simmer for 5 minutes on the stovetop and give it a few scrubs with a scratchless, heavy-duty sponge.

**89.** Soak overnight in baking soda and vinegar. By morning, it'll just be a matter of rinsing, drying and stowing away for the next holiday.

**90.** Let the roasting pan sit overnight in your refrigerator. The cool, moist climate of the fridge will soften the baked-on bits, so in the morning, you can scrape them away with a rubber spatula. No scouring required.

**91.** Use an inexpensive, disposable roasting pan next time! No muss, no fuss.

**READER TIP**  
I CAN'T FIT MUCH IN THE OVEN BEYOND THE TURKEY. I TURN TO THE RICE STEAMER, SLOW-COOKER AND MICROWAVE FOR SIDE DISHES.

—SHERRY WINTERBURN, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



## The Morning After

Your guests are still around—and they're hungry. Again. Turn leftover ingredients into an awesome breakfast.

**92. Cranberries**

Simmer with maple syrup and a cinnamon stick. Pour on waffles.

**93. Pumpkin puree**

Add to muffin mix in place of the oil for pumpkin muffins.

**94. Aunt Frieda's fruit salad**

Blend with yogurt and ice cubes for smoothies.

**95. Candied yams**

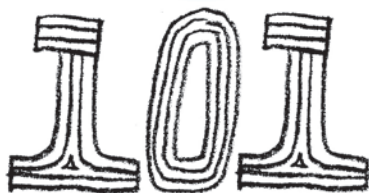
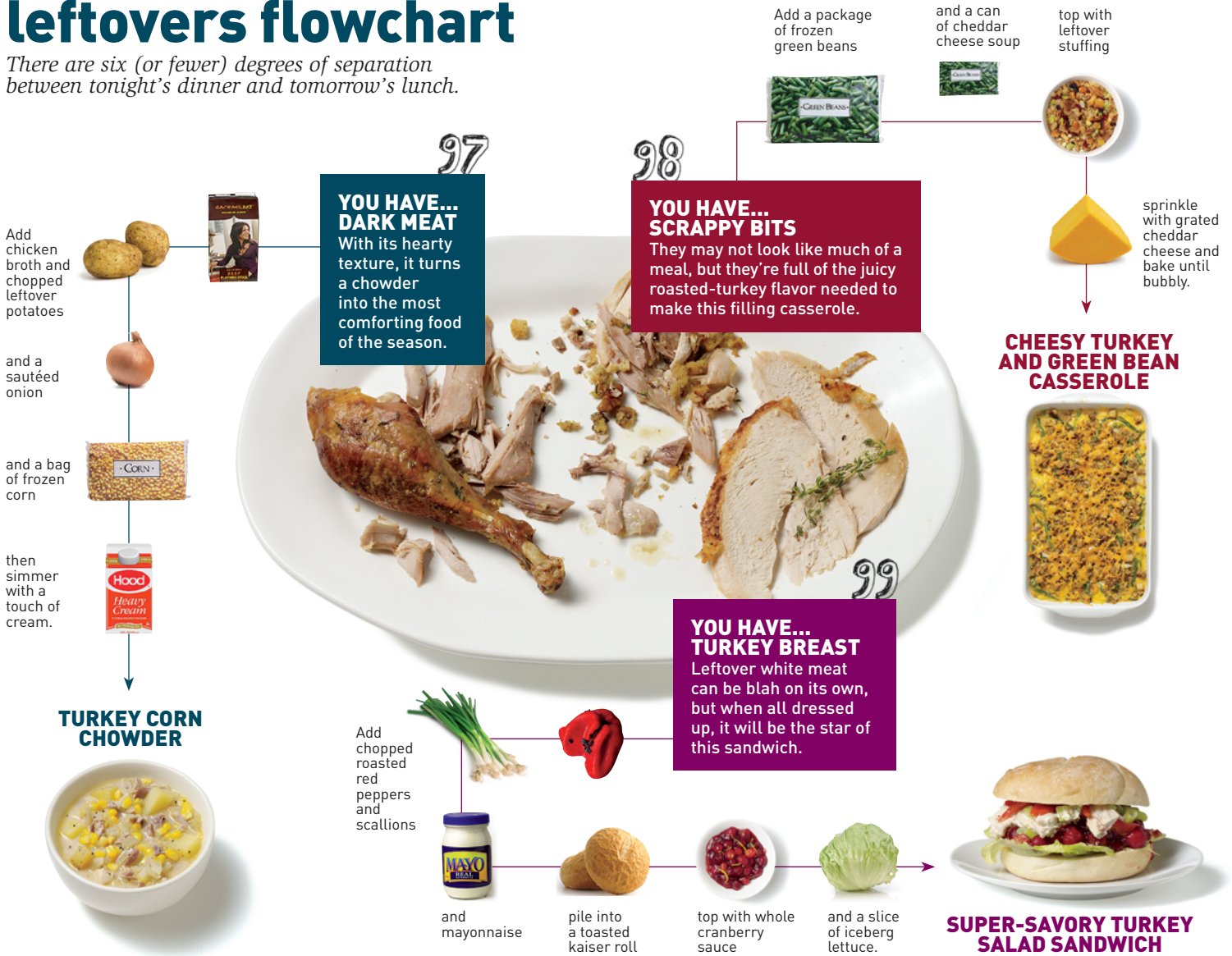
Mash with egg and breadcrumbs. Fry for candied hash browns.

**96. Jarred Chestnuts**

Mix with eggs, cheese and herbs. Bake at 350° for a frittata.

## leftovers flowchart

There are six (or fewer) degrees of separation between tonight's dinner and tomorrow's lunch.



100

**READER TIP**

**MIGHT SOUND BLASPHEMOUS, BUT FORGET THE TURKEY! I STUFF CORNISH HENS. EACH IS LARGE ENOUGH FOR A BIG EATER.**

—GABRIELA RODRIGUEZ, Round Lake, IL

**SKIP HOSTING THE HOLIDAY ALTOGETHER, AND HEAD TO A BED-AND-BREAKFAST FOR THE BIG FEAST. TURN TO PAGE 152 FOR OUR CROSS-COUNTRY PICKS.**

NUMBER 97, COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DAVID LEWIS TAYLOR; PAUL COTNEY/ALAMY; KEITH LEIGHTON/ALAMY; PHOTO OBJECTS/JUPITERIMAGES; COURTESY OF HOOD; KANG KIM. NUMBER 98, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HEMERA TECHNOLOGIES/JUPITERIMAGES; COURTESY OF CAMPBELL'S; KANG KIM; D. HURST/ALAMY; KANG KIM. NUMBER 99, COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP: DIGITAL VISION/ALAMY; KEITH LEIGHTON/ALAMY; STEVEN MARK NEEDHAM/JUPITERIMAGES; CCMACROSHOTS/ALAMY; KANG KIM; OLEKSIY MAKSYMENKO/ALAMY; KANG KIM.