

# Christmas dinner countdown

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## 3-4 days ahead

Make the cranberry sauce and Christmas pudding (if you haven't already). Cover and chill.

## Christmas Eve

- Prepare the stuffing. Store one third in a covered bowl in the fridge; use the rest to make bacon-wrapped sausages and chill in a covered oven-proof dish.
- Make sauce for Christmas pudding; cover and chill.
- Make the black tea brine and cover turkey following my recipe and leave in the fridge until morning.
- Prepare turkey stock (if making your own). Allow to cool, cover and chill.
- Prepare and weigh ingredients for your Marmite bread sauce if that's the recipe you've chosen.
- Peel and cut potatoes and carrots; keep the potatoes covered in cold water and cover carrots with a damp cloth. Do not soak the carrots as this will dilute their flavour.
- Scrub and cut your parsnips and store in a bowl using the same method as the carrots.
- Take anything you have prepared in advance out of the freezer and leave in the fridge to defrost.
- Chill the champagne, wine and water.



## Christmas Day

### 9.30am

- Stuff the turkey, weigh and calculate cooking time (18 minutes per 450g/1lb).
- Preheat oven to Fan 170°C. Conventional 190°C/Gas 5.

### 10.15am

- Place the turkey in the oven to roast. (Timing based on a 4.5kg/10lb bird, weighed after stuffing). Cover with foil. Check and baste every hour.
- Prepare red onions and squash.

### 12.30pm

Cook the potatoes on the hob for around 8 minutes, be brave with this, the further they go the fluffier the final result. Drain and give them a shake- this will make them crispy later. Tip them into a large tray in one layer, and add the fat - olive oil, butter or goose fat - then season really well. Toss well, so they get completely covered in fat.

### 12.45pm

- Uncover the turkey. 15 minutes later, pour over thyme infused oil or baste with butter and fresh thyme leaves.
- Lay the table.

### 1.15pm

- Remove turkey from oven, cover tightly with foil and leave to rest.
- Drain off resting juices and use to make bread sauce.
- Put red onions, squash, and stuffing rolls in oven to roast.
- Make gravy.
- Reheat bread sauce, stirring occasionally.
- Put your parsnips in to roast.

### 1.30pm

- Put your Christmas pudding on to steam.
- Warm plates and serving dishes. If there is no room in the oven, place them in a sink of boiling water and dry them just before serving.
- Take the cranberry sauce from the fridge and allow to warm at room temperature, this will improve the flavour.

### 1.45pm

Cook carrots in as little water as possible so you retain their full flavour, fry or boil your sprouts. Make sure someone pours the cook a drink...

### 2.00pm

Carve the turkey. Serve dinner, sit back and enjoy!

**I hope that my time plan will leave you feeling relaxed and triumphant. Now all you have to do is work out what to cook with all those leftovers!**

### TIP

*If you have a meat thermometer, push it into the thickest part of a thigh, avoiding the bone. It should read 90°C if the turkey is cooked through. Another test is to pierce the thigh with a skewer and catch the juices with a spoon. The turkey is cooked if the juices are clear and golden, but if they are pink or streaked with blood, return the bird to the oven for a further 20-30 minutes, then test again.*

