**THANKSGIVING PREPARATION COUNTDOWN**

**Early November**

* Invite guests, and if others will be brining dishes keep track of who is bringing what
* Plan out your menu
* Create your grocery and shopping list
* Order anything you’ll need for the big day, such as a fresh turkey or a table centerpiece
* Make a preliminary decision about your table decorations

**Two weeks prior**

* Begin getting table decorations ready, including cleaning or polishing silver, fine china and glassware, and ironing tablecloths and napkins
* Shop for nonperishable items from your grocery list
* Clean out refrigerator to make room for Thanksgiving items
* Plan what serving dishes or platters will be used to serve each menu item, and use something like an index card to label and designate each dishes use
* Plan for leftovers, including organizing food storage containers and ways to allow guests to take leftovers home
* Create any non-perishable table decorations, such as place cards, centerpiece, [fold napkins](http://www.household-management-101.com/how-to-fold-a-napkin.html), etc.
* Plan seating arrangements for all guests, and confirm have enough chairs, plates, glasses, etc.

**One week prior**

* Create a cooking schedule for the few days prior to Thanksgiving, and by the hour for Thanksgiving day (you can use this printable schedule)
* Check thawing time for your frozen turkey (read this article for tips)
* Prepare guests rooms and guests areas for company
* Clean house, including any decorations or clean up on the exterior of your home

**4-3 days prior**

* Begin to defrost your turkey (depends on the size, so check the article above for tips)
* Confirm what guests are bringing, including serving dishes to be used and cooking or heating needed for those dishes
* Continue any cleaning or decorating that can be done ahead of time

**2 days ahead**

* Grocery shop for perishable items
* Chill beverages
* Any prep ahead cooking or preparation of ingredients that can be done today, especially from recently bought perishable ingredients

**1 day ahead**

* Continue prep ahead cooking or prepping ingredients to the extent possible
* Confirm everything in house, including in bathrooms, is ready for guests
* Confirm house cleaning tasks done, especially in kitchen and any rooms where guests will be entertained
* Set table, including with table decorations
* Set out all serving dishes, in order, where they will be used
* Create drink station for guests use during the day and for the meal itself

**Thanksgiving day**

* Fill condiment dishes (refrigerate as necessary until time for use)
* Assign family members to help with guests, including answering door, taking coats, serving drinks, etc.
* Cook the majority of the meal (use your hour by hour schedule you created earlier to make sure you stay on track)
* Clean up kitchen as much as you can, as you cook
* After cooking, add to the serving dishes, and have others help you add food and drinks to the table
* Enjoy dinner with family and friends

**Cleanup**

* Gather linens, such as napkins and tablecloths for laundering, and wash them
* Add as much stuff to the dishwasher as possible
* Put away leftovers, including creating packages for guests to take some home, and refrigerate all leftovers
* Hand wash pots, pans, and anything else that cannot be washed in the dishwasher
* Clear kitchen counters and clean them
* Make sure to return (after washing) any borrowed items, such as serving pieces, dishes, or other items
* Put away dishes, serving pieces and glassware