

Stock the pantry with holiday baking ingredients

Many holiday traditions begin with family and friends gathered in the kitchen or around the dinner table. Food is an integral part of celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas and Chanukah, and key components of each holiday are tied exclusively to food. Come the holiday season, many people gather to make delicious desserts for holiday dinners or even as gifts. The right ingredients are necessary to produce a bounty of baked goods. It's also essential to ensure those ingredients are fresh, as age can compromise the taste of some spices, and leavening ingredients like yeast, baking soda and baking powder may lose efficacy over time.

- **Flours:** All-purpose flour is versatile and useful in many recipes. In addition, bread flour, cake flour and pastry flour have attributes that make them better suited for their respective jobs than all-

purpose flour. Individuals who follow certain diets, including gluten-free diets, can find alternative flours that can be substituted in many different recipes.

- **Baking soda:** This leavening agent is activated when it is combined with acid and heat. That is why it is often paired with citrus juice, buttermilk and sour cream.
- **Baking powder:** This leavening agent is baking soda mixed with a powdered acid and cornstarch. If baking soda is the only leavening agent, it will not require the addition of another acidic ingredient. "Double-acting" means carbon dioxide bubbles will form during mixing and again during heating.
- **Yeast:** Yeast takes more time to metabolize and cause doughs to rise than other leavening agents.
- **Sugar:** Granulated sugar is the most common sugar found in

recipes. Confectioner's sugar (powdered sugar) is used in frosting and icings. Brown sugar is refined sugar with molasses added, and is used in certain recipes, like gingerbread.

- **Salt:** Granulated table salt is used in everyday baking.
- **Unsalted butter:** Unsalted butter will be the default for baked goods unless the recipe specifically mentions salted butter.
- **Eggs:** Eggs help to bind ingredients together. Large eggs are most often cited in many baking recipes.
- **Milk:** Dairy adds moisture and texture to batters. Alternative milks, such as soy or almond milk, can sometimes be substituted, but the resulting texture may change.
- **Vegetable oil:** Many recipes call for vegetable oil, which has a neutral flavor.
- **Shortening:** Shortening is a solid vegetable fat used to make

tender baked goods. Shortening also has a higher melting point, which helps cookies and other items retain their shape while cooking.

- **Flavorings:** It is helpful to have various spices and extracts on hand. Cinnamon, ginger,

nutmeg, cloves, and allspice are some common baking spices. Almond and vanilla extracts are quite versatile and add extra punch to recipes.

- **Additions:** Mix-ins, such as chocolate chips, cocoa powder, oats, nuts, and dried fruits, of-

ten turn up in holiday recipes. Certain ingredients are essential for baking and holiday cooks can take steps to ensure their pantries are stocked in time for the holidays.



How small businesses can capitalize on Black Friday

Millions of small businesses have had a difficult year in 2020. As the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spread across the globe, governments all over the world took unprecedented measures to prevent the virus from claiming more lives. Public health measures like social distancing undoubtedly saved lives, but small businesses bore the brunt of the economic impact of such measures. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the number of active business owners decreased by 22 percent from February to April 2020. A Brookings analysis of Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker data found that, compared to January 2020, small businesses in North Dakota, Washington, D.C. and Hawaii experienced a 60 percent decline in revenue between mid-March and mid-May. In the wake of such challenges, many small businesses have been forced to shutter. For those that have managed to stay afloat, the upcoming holi-

day season could prove vital to their survival. Black Friday is the day after Thanksgiving and marks the unofficial beginning of the holiday shopping season. It's a day when consumer spending annually reaches into the billions of dollars. For example, Adobe Analytics reported that Black Friday shoppers spent a record \$7.4 billion in 2019. Capitalizing on Black Friday in 2020 can help small businesses generate a substantial amount of revenue in a year that has been chock full of financial challenges. The following are some strategies small businesses can employ to make this Black Friday as lucrative as possible.

- **Connect with the locals.** In recognition of the economic challenges faced by small businesses in 2020, local chambers of commerce have gone to great lengths to encourage residents to shop local as economies have slowly reopened. Residents have responded to such efforts,

and small businesses can do their part by making concerted efforts to connect with locals in advance of Black Friday. Advertise Black Friday sales in local newspapers and join your local chamber of commerce in encouraging shop local efforts on Black Friday.

- **Open early.** In an effort to promote social distancing, some big box retailers have announced changes to their Black Friday strategies. Those changes may include more limited store hours and later openings. Local small business owners can capitalize on such strategical shifts by opening their stores early on Black Friday without compromising social distancing guidelines. Place a sign outside your store that highlights your early opening but also reminds customers of your mask and social distancing policy. Thank customers in advance for adhering to your policy and for bringing much-needed revenue to your business.

- **Optimize your mobile site.** Lines are the norm on a typical Black Friday, but they might be even longer this year as small businesses minimize the number of people they allow in their store at one time. By optimizing their mobile sites in advance of Black Friday, small business owners can ensure shoppers waiting online have access to what's inside the store

even before they enter. That can make it easier to wait on line and ease customers' concerns about spending too much time inside the store.

- **Emphasize your status as a small business.** The pandemic will no doubt compel many Black Friday shoppers to avoid crowded malls and big box stores in 2020. Small business owners can use their status as

small businesses to their advantage by reminding customers their showrooms are small and easily controlled. Small businesses may be struggling in 2020. But Black Friday is a golden opportunity for small businesses to recoup some of the revenue they've lost in a challenging year.



How to approach hosting Thanksgiving during the pandemic

Much like the holidays that preceded it in 2020, Thanksgiving figures to be different this year. An ongoing pandemic has changed the way much of the world lives their lives, including how holidays are celebrated.

As the novel coronavirus COVID-19 spread across the globe beginning in the winter of 2019-20, the World Health Organization recommended a host of behaviors designed to prevent the spread of the virus and protect those who are most vulnerable to it. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also noted the importance of keeping distance from others, especially for those who are most likely to get seriously ill if they're exposed to COVID-19, such as the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions.

The WHO and the CDC continue to recommend social distancing, which means Thanksgiving in

2020 will be unlike any other. Families must make their own decisions about getting together this holiday season, but hosts who intend to welcome guests into their homes this Thanksgiving can take certain steps to keep everyone as safe as possible.

- **Scale back the guest list.** Families accustomed to large Thanksgiving gatherings can scale the festivities back this year in an effort to keep everyone safe. Consider hosting a meal for immediate family members only, as the Environmental Protection Agency notes that COVID-19 may spread more easily in indoor environments via airborne particles. Extended family members can visit each other over the long holiday weekend to ensure everyone still sees each other, but keep such visits outdoors when possible.
- **Consider eating Thanksgiving dinner outside.** If the weather permits, consider eating Thanksgiving

dinner outside this year. Doing so may limit everyone's exposure to the respiratory droplets that researchers say can spread the virus when inhaled. If necessary, serve the meal earlier than you normally would so everyone can eat in midday when it's still warm outside. Hosts also can consider serving something more convenient than turkey, which takes a long time to cook, and limiting side dishes to one or two items.

- **Assign seats.** If the meal will be served indoors, then hosts can assign seats to protect those most vulnerable to serious illness from COVID-19. Instead of cramming everyone in at one table, set up temporary tables and have guests sit in every other seat rather than next to one another. Isolate the vulnerable as much as possible while still ensuring they can engage in conversation.
- **Discourage guests from attending** if they feel

sick. A list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found at www.cdc.gov. In the days prior to Thanksgiving, hosts can share that list with guests via email or social media and discourage guests who are feeling ill on or around the holiday from attending the festivities. If necessary, make a to-go plate for ill relatives and drop it off at their homes so they can still enjoy Thanksgiving dinner.

- **Stock up on hand soap and hand sanitizer.** Hosts should make sure hand soap and sanitizer is readily available throughout their homes. When guests arrive, make sure everyone washes their hands immediately, and encourage guests to continue doing so throughout the day.

Thanksgiving will be different in 2020. Hosts need to adjust their normal Thanksgiving routines to ensure the safety of their guests.

Did you know?

Sweet potatoes, which are sometimes referred to as "yams," are widely associated with Thanksgiving. But these starchy tubers are so nutritious that people may want to consume them more often. Sweet potatoes are loaded with fiber and an assortment of vitamins, including vitamin A and vitamin C, as the online medical resource Healthline.com notes that a one-cup serving of baked sweet potatoes with the skin still on can provide as much as 65 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin C. And the benefits of sweet potatoes don't stop there. A 2015 study published in the medical journal Food & Nutrition Research found that anthocyanin, an antioxidant found in sweet potatoes, can protect eye cells from damage. That can pro-

mote healthier eyes and potentially help people maintain stronger vision as they age. In addition, an animal study found that the anthocyanin found in purple sweet potatoes can protect brain function by reducing inflammation and preventing free radical damage. While further study is necessary to determine if similar effects can be enjoyed by humans who consume sweet potatoes, the potential to improve brain function is yet another reason to include nutrient-packed sweet potatoes in your diet.



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we pause to count our blessings.
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we are deeply thankful.
Our best wishes for a
Happy Thanksgiving.

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