

Don't settle for dull turkey gravy at Thanksgiving

By Sara Moulton
The Associated Press

Just because Thanksgiving mostly is about tradition doesn't mean that we aren't open to going off script when it comes to side dishes and exactly how to cook the big bird.

But the gravy? It's where innovation goes to die! Generally, we're content to just pour some store-bought chicken broth, along with a little butter and flour, into the pan in which the turkey was roasted, then call it a day. In truth, I love pan gravy as much as anyone, but you can make a more exciting gravy with just a little more work.

We were taught in cooking school that your sauce will only be as good as the liquid you add to it. In the case of turkey gravy, that would be turkey broth. What can be done to amp up its flavor?

To start, you want to brown the turkey parts that have been packed inside the bird — the neck and the giblets (that is, the heart and the gizzards). Then, slice off the bird's wings — which nobody eats anyway — and add them to the other parts. (Do not add the liver; it will make the stock bitter. Instead, just reserve or freeze it until you can sauté it in butter and serve it on toast. Yum!)

Browning these turkey parts in the company of some carrots and onions develops complex flavors. This is called the Maillard reaction. It's what happens when amino acids combined with the sugars found in meat and many vegetables are heated above 300° Fahrenheit. Concentrated juices from these ingredients will collect in the bottom of the pan as you brown them. When you deglaze the pan, you dissolve those juices and add them to the browned ingredients, further deepening the stock's flavor.

You may be surprised to find tomato paste among this recipe's ingredients, but tomatoes happen to be a terrific source of umami. Umami is the fifth taste, after sweet, sour,



AP Photo/Matthew Mead

salty, and bitter. It is usually described as "meaty." The carrots in the stock also contribute umami. Briefly sautéing the tomato paste in the skillet helps to brown it and develop its natural sugars.

Having cooked up your stock in a separate pan, you're eventually going to want to add to it the juices that streamed out of the turkey while it roasted and use the fat that accumulated in the pan while you basted the bird. Again, this is how you intensify the gravy's turkey flavor.

By the way, don't despair if your turkey is missing the happy little package of giblets and neck bone usually found inside the cavity; you'll still have the turkey wings. Just cut them off and supplement with some chicken wings. You'll need about eight ounces of poultry parts in total. Finally, I recommend making the turkey stock a day or two in advance of the feast. It will make the big day itself a little less stressful.

Sara Moulton is host of public television's "Sara's Weeknight Meals." She was executive chef at *Gourmet* magazine for nearly 25 years and spent a decade hosting several Food Network shows, including "Cooking Live." Her latest cookbook is *Home Cooking 101*.



Katie Workman via AP

Cooking on deadline: Pumpkin Cream Cheese Brownies

By Katie Workman
The Associated Press

I decided to take my favorite brownie recipe, the one I published in *The Mom 100 Cookbook* a handful of years ago, and turn it into something that says, "Hi, pumpkin season, how've you been?"

The bottom layer is a fudgy brownie, dense and with a serious hit of chocolate. The top layer is a creamy pumpkin cheesecake, scented with those great fall spices. Then a bit of the brownie mixture (which you will reserve) is dolloped on top and swirled into the cheesecake mixture for a beautiful, brown and pale orange marbled effect. These are thick and rich and the kind of dessert where you're going to end up feeling pretty pleased with yourself. It's a dessert to impress, with no fancy baking techniques required.

You can store the brownies at room temperature in a tightly sealed container for a day, or in the fridge for several days. Let them sit for at least 30 minutes at room temperature before serving.

Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, *Dinner Solved!* and *The Mom 100 Cookbook*.

Pumpkin Cream Cheese Brownies

Makes 24 brownies

For the Brownies:

- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 3 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 2 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

For the Pumpkin Cheesecake:

- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, at room temperature
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup puréed canned pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 350° Fahrenheit. Generously butter or spray a 9"x13" baking pan with non-stick spray.

Make the brownie batter: Melt together the butter and chocolate in a medium size pot over low heat, stirring until smooth. Remove from the heat and stir in the cocoa powder, sugar, and salt, then blend in the vanilla. Beat in the eggs one at a time, stirring quickly so they don't have a chance to cook at all before they are blended in. Blend in the flour.

Scrape about 3/4 of the thick batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top with a spatula. Set the pan and the remaining brownie batter (about one cup) aside.

Make the pumpkin cheesecake batter: In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese and sugar with an electric mixer until smooth. Add the cinnamon, ginger, salt, and cloves and beat, scraping down the sides, until well combined. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, and then beat in the pumpkin, cream, and vanilla until smooth. Spread the pumpkin cheesecake batter over the brownie batter in the pan, and then use a tablespoon to dollop remaining brownie batter over the top in spots. Use a dull knife to swirl the mixtures together on top, making sure to leave it very streaky, and not blend too much.

Bake for about 40 to 45 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the brownies comes out clean.

Allow the brownies to cool completely in the pan set on a wire rack. Cut into 24 squares.

Nutritional information per serving: 283 calories (166 calories from fat); 19 g fat (11 g saturated, 1 g trans fats); 90 mg cholesterol; 166 mg sodium; 29 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 21 g sugar; 4 g protein.

Bigger and Better Turkey Gravy

Start to finish: 4 hours 15 minutes (35 minutes active)

Makes 5 cups

- The neck, wings, and giblets (about 8-ounces total) from an 18- to 24-pound turkey
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, medium-chopped
- 1 medium carrot, medium-chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 6 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 celery stalk, coarsely chopped
- 2 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf

- The drippings, 1/2 cup fat and pan juices from an 18- to 24-pound roasted turkey
- Butter, melted (if there isn't enough fat from the turkey to make the gravy)
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tablespoons instant flour (such as Wondra)
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper

Carefully chop the neck and wings into one-inch pieces and pat them and the giblets dry. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, heat the oil. Add the turkey pieces and giblets, reduce the heat to medium and cook, stirring occasionally, until they are golden brown, eight to 10 minutes. Add the onion, carrot, and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are golden brown, about five minutes.

Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for one minute. Transfer the mixture to a medium saucepan and add one cup of water to the skillet. Deglaze the pan over high heat, scraping up the brown bits with a spatula, until all the bits have been dissolved. Pour the mixture over the turkey parts in the saucepan. Add the chicken broth and two cups water to the saucepan.

Bring the liquid to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook, skimming the scum that rises to the surface with a skimmer or slotted spoon, until there is no more scum, 15 to 20 minutes. Add the celery, thyme, and bay leaf, then simmer gently for two hours. Strain the stock through a colander, pressing hard on the solids. Discard the solids and measure the stock; you should have four cups. If you have more, return the liquid to the saucepan and simmer until it is reduced to four cups. If you have less, add water to the stock to make four cups. Cool, cover, and chill until it is time to make the gravy.

When the turkey is cooked and resting on a platter, pour all the liquid in the roasting pan into a fat separator or large glass measuring cup. Pour or skim off the fat from the cup and reserve it; leave the cooking juices in the fat separator. You will need 1/2 cup of the fat for the gravy; if you don't have 1/2 cup, supplement with melted butter.

Set the roasting pan on top of two burners set over medium-low heat. Add the fat, followed by the flour. Whisk the mixture, preferably using a flat whisk, for five minutes. Add the reserved cooking juices from the roasting pan and two-thirds of the turkey stock. Bring the mixture to a boil, whisking. If the gravy needs thinning, add more of the turkey stock and the juices that accumulated on the platter where the turkey has been resting.

Reduce the heat to a simmer and simmer for 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Nutrition information per 1/4 cup: 70 calories (50 calories from fat, 71 percent of total calories); 6 g fat (1.5 g saturated, 0 g trans fats); 5 mg cholesterol; 170 mg sodium; 4 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 1 g protein.

Mushroom Gravy

Proceed with the master recipe up to the point of adding the fat to the roasting pan. Add half the fat and 1/3 cup minced shallots and cook over medium heat, stirring, for three minutes. Add eight ounces of assorted sliced mushrooms and one tablespoon chopped fresh thyme. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms are golden, about five minutes. Add the remaining fat and the flour and cook, stirring, for five minutes. Add 1/3 cup dry sherry, Madeira, or tawny port, or 1/2 cup red wine (this is optional; you can leave the alcohol out) along with the reserved cooking juices and two-thirds of the turkey stock. Bring the mixture to a boil, whisking. If the gravy needs thinning, add more of the turkey stock and the juices that accumulated on the platter where the turkey has been resting. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Mustard-Herb Gravy

Proceed with the master recipe up through the point of cooking the fat and flour for five minutes. Add 1/2 cup of dry white wine (this is optional; you can leave the alcohol out) along with the reserved cooking juices and two-thirds of the turkey stock. Bring the mixture to a boil, whisking. If the gravy needs thinning, add more of the turkey stock and the juices that accumulated on the platter where the turkey has been resting. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes. Whisk in two tablespoons Dijon mustard and two to four tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil, tarragon, or sage. Season with salt and pepper.

The staff at *The Asian Reporter* wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday!