

Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcasts. So I get to host Thanksgiving this year on our homestead. I had been hosting for several years now and it's actually something I really enjoy. So I am in the thick of getting my menu plans ready now, sadly for a lot of America thinks giving food equals processed food. We've got that famous green bean casserole that swims in MSG cream soup and there is the jiggly cranberry jelly that comes straight out of the can and goes right to the table. And then of course you can't forget about the sweet potatoes or the yams that are buried in a pile of marshmallows, which I still don't understand why that ever became a thing, but of course it is. But anyway, in my opinion, I think this processed version of Thanksgiving has gotta go. It's outdated. We know more about nutrition than we did 50 years ago when a lot of these foods became popular.

Speaker 1: [01:08](#) It's time to go back to a from scratch Thanksgiving because honestly the boxes and the cans of processed junk there are really sad substitute for the rich flavors of a from scratch holiday meal. So to give you a leg up on this process, I want to share some of my favorite strategies for a from scratch Thanksgiving homestead style. I'm your host Jill winger. And for the last 10 years or so I've been helping people just like you who feel a little bit uninspired by modern life. I'll show you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by learning how to grow your own food and master old fashioned skills. So even in the midst of our very full farm life and our businesses and homeschooling and the whole nine yards, I really enjoy cooking Thanksgiving. And I do love going to other people's houses as well.

Speaker 1: [02:15](#) But there's really something special to me about the hustle and bustle and the preparations in my kitchen with our homegrown ingredients. And I really, really enjoy it. So one of the neat things I think about Thanksgiving is it is that if you peel back these layers of all of these, quote unquote traditional processed foods that we have come to associate with the day, it's really a meal for homesteaders. And when we look at a lot of these core ingredients, many of them are very easy for a lot of us to grow ourselves, which is pretty darn awesome. I think now, and even if you don't have a lot of homegrown options or you don't live in a place where you can keep animals or raise vegetables, I'm still going to challenge you to use as many fresh or whole ingredients as possible in your Thanksgiving day preparation.

Speaker 1: [03:11](#) So here are a few of the things that I do. I find that all in all, Thanksgiving isn't as complicated as a lot of people think. I mean it can be if you have 29 different sides and you know, all

of those things, but I usually put on a pretty decent Thanksgiving day spread and it's not horrendously overwhelming. It's actually pretty simple. So here are some of my strategies and tips, hopefully that hopefully you'll find this helpful. Okay. So we can't talk Thanksgiving without Turkey of course. And I'm sure there are some of you out there who do other meats. Totally cool. We're definitely Turkey people and I will have another episode just on the Turkey process because this is something I do every year. I'm very particular about how we handle our Thanksgiving Turkey. It does make a difference. So I will have another podcast episode with all of that nitty gritty.

Speaker 1: [04:11](#) But let me just say for the sake of this episode, I always brine our Turkey, um, for the last few years we've had home grown turkeys. They're always ridiculously huge because Christian and I cannot seem to butcher them in a reasonable timeframe. So they usually are ginormous and we usually have to take every single rack out of the oven and like strategically cram it in there. So far they've all fit. I'm still waiting for the year when it's like, Oh, the Turkey won't fit in the oven. Now what are we going to do? But anyway, brining is magic. Basically. brine, if you're not familiar with it, is just salt water. You soak the Turkey in salt water at least overnight. You can add other ingredients, herbs and honey and spices, but you can also just do salt water and it makes the most tender, juicy, flavorful bird I've ever eaten.

Speaker 1: [05:09](#) And you don't even have to inject the poor thing with all of the junk that they do at the grocery store because you know right that most of the, the turkeys we eat that we buy at the grocery store for Thanksgiving day, they'd been pumped full of stuff like broth and who knows what else. So you don't have to pump your Turkey full of anything and it's still amazing. So if you can swing brining your Turkey, I highly recommend it and check out that other podcast episode for all of my techniques and details related to that. Now I think Turkey is number one, but number two on the menu for me is always mashed potatoes. I usually make a ridiculous amount, I would say a VAT of mashed potatoes because leftovers are non. For Thanksgiving I usually will use whatever I have grown in the garden that year, which tends to be things like Yukon gold or some sort of red potato.

Speaker 1: [06:10](#) There's, I think there's a little bit of debate on potato types and here's how I kind of think of it. Your colored potatoes, the yellows, the reds, the purples, a lot of those are higher in starch. So they have a slightly different texture. So some mashed potato connoisseurs will tell you that. Russet potatoes, you know, the regular Brown ones that you buy in the 15 pound

bags at the store, those are the superior potato for mashing personally. And you know, I kind of go back and forth. I like Yukon golds. They're my favorite. I love the golden color. They bring, I usually leave the peels on if they're homegrown cause I love that texture. So that's what I generally opt for. No matter what you do, you gotta promise me that you don't use the potato flakes. It's really not hard to make mashed potatoes.

Speaker 1: [07:06](#)

Like, I just, I can't tell you that the flavor difference is 1000% worth it. 100000%. Like the potato flakes are a travesty in my opinion. No one should eat those. So grab a bag of potatoes at the store. If you do not have homegrown ones, they're not that expensive. My little tip for amazing mashed potatoes, I have a couple and I have a blog post on this, which we can link in the show notes, but I'll kind of give you the cliff notes version right now. Is that after you, I cut up my potatoes into chunks. I boil them till they're fork tender, then I drain them in a colander in the sink and then I put them right back into the hot pot that they have been boiling in. But there's no water in there now, right? It's empty. And I just turn it on low and I'll stir those potatoes and you'll hear the steam start to come off of them.

Speaker 1: [08:04](#)

They'll sizzle a little bit, which is good because it's helping that extra water evaporate off, which will make your final potatoes fluffier. And the texture will be good and they won't be waterlogged. So just a couple minutes on low heat to get rid of that water is kind of a little bit of a magic tool there that I use every time I make mashed potatoes. And of course beyond that, lots of butter, lots of sour cream. Sometimes I do cream cheese depending on what I have in the fridge and definitely garlic. So you can do some roasted garlic, which is fantastic. You can even boil a couple cloves of garlic in with your mashed potatoes while they're cooking and kind of infuse that water with garlic flavor. And then the clove can just be mashed with the potatoes and you'll never even know it's there. So I know there are other potato methods.

Speaker 1: [09:01](#)

Mashed potatoes are our thing because you've got to have something to hold the gravy, right? It's a, it's a gravy vehicle and the potatoes are beautiful for that. Okay. So sometimes we do yams and sweet potatoes. This year and in years past, I will be doing honey whipped carrots instead. So I don't really have any family members or extended family members who are huge, sweet potato fans. They're all kind of like, eh, they're fine, but they're not going to miss them if they're gone. So our orange vegetable is carrots. We use carrots instead, primarily because we can't really grow sweet potatoes in Wyoming. I mean, maybe I could, I don't know. Never tried it. I think that our

growing season is a wee bit short for that. So we can definitely grow carrots. I have all sorts of carrots out in the garden. They're actually still out in the garden and I will probably leave them there until Thanksgiving cause you can leave them out there even when there's snow on the ground.

Speaker 1: [10:05](#) And when it freezes, it kinda makes them a little bit sweeter. So we'll be pulling those carrots very likely on Thanksgiving day morning. And then this recipe is in my cookbook. But what I do, it's so simple. Peel the carrots, chop them into chunks. We're going to steam them or boil them till they're soft. And then I puree them with a little bit of butter, a little bit of honey, a little bit of salt. The texture is fantastic. They're light and fluffy, they're a little bit sweet from the honey and carrots are usually sweet anyway and they are amazing. And even carrot haters like the kids are, they, they gobble them up. So, sweet potatoes are still a great option. You can absolutely do sweet potatoes. There are plenty of recipes for different sweet potato dishes that you don't have to use all the marshmallows.

Speaker 1: [10:56](#) Now I get it. If marshmallows are your thing, I'm not going to shame you for marshmallows, at least. Not a whole lot, but no, really. If you want to do marshmallows, go for it, right? It's once a year. Put the marshmallows on the sweet potatoes, make the family members happy, but you don't have to keep in mind, you can also use things like just butter and maple syrup and some cinnamon. You don't have to go full on marshmallow craziness if you don't want to. So there's a lot of different alternative, healthier, sweet potato or yam recipes floating around online. And I think you'll be able to find an option that you guys like for your family pretty easily. All right. So as far as cranberry sauce goes, I think most of us would agree that is a staple. This is a hot topic. There are some definite opinions floating around about cranberry sauce.

Speaker 1: [11:48](#) I am not in the jiggly canned cranberry jelly camp. That is not where I reside. Okay. Like I just, I'm just not a fan. Even as a kid, it felt really weird to me that we had all this amazing food on the table and we would like unsuction this jelly stuff out of the can and we wouldn't even like, like the ridges were still there and it would be like shaking in the cylinder on the table. And I'm like, it's sitting next to all this amazing food and it looks really weird. So anyway, we usually make or always make real cranberry sauce. It's so stinking and easy. And I have, again, this is in my cookbook, it's on the blog in a nutshell. So you can just kind of picture this process. You're going to grab some fresh cranberries. I cannot grow these sadly, so I do buy cranberries if you can grow them.

Speaker 1: [12:42](#) I am so jealous right now, but anyway, I buy fresh cranberries. They're usually available in a bag in the produce area of a grocery store around the holidays, so they're fairly easy to find. The cool thing is you can buy multiple bags and pop the whole darn thing right in the freezer and it'll last. So there have been years where I buy two bags at a time and I save the next one till the next Thanksgiving. Well, come to think of it? It's probably a little bit of flavor loss from sitting in the fridge that long, but not enough to really notice and just makes one step a little bit easier. Anyway, grab the fresh cranberries and then we're just going to simmer them in a little bit of honey and a little bit of orange juice and they pop once they simmer long enough, they pop and release.

Speaker 1: [13:32](#) I think it's, I think there's pectin in there and they get thick and jelly, so it's amazing. It's beautiful. It doesn't have ridges like the canned stuff and it's super easy. So if you've never tried real cranberry sauce, that's an awesome thing for you to add into your menu this year. It's not a lot of headache. It's very, very simple. And the wow factor is way up there like way up there with your family members. One little note, we've noticed that the sweetness of the cranberry sauce tends to decrease just a little bit as it sits in the refrigerator. So I often make this a day ahead, to just to eliminate the craziness on Thanksgiving morning and I will taste it and I will, you know, check the sweetness level as I'm simmering. And then I've noticed once it sits in the fridge, it reduces a little bit.

Speaker 1: [14:27](#) So maybe add a little bit more honey than you think you need and that will account for that decrease as it sets. All right, green bean casserole. Now again, I understand that there are certain people who live for green bean casserole. If that is your thing, you know, go for it. Like do your thing. Follow your heart. It's totally cool. We're not huge green bean casserole fans, especially not the versions which, let's be honest, most of them are that contain the junkie MSG cream soups. I am literally on a mission to ban those from anyone's pantry cause they're just horrendous. Um, so what we do instead, fresh green beans and I usually have some from the garden in the freezer, so I'll just pull them out of the freezer. I steam them and with salt and we put add some butter and some pepper and they're really good and they taste really fresh.

Speaker 1: [15:27](#) And that's our green vegetable. If you guys are official green bean casserole connoisseurs, you can still do that. And there's actually ways to make your own roux. That's R O U X, which is that cream sauce or your own cream of mushroom soups without the MSG and the garbage. So if you really want the

green bean casserole, just I would Google some of those options. I probably have some on my blog. I have some linked at least, where you can make your own soup, your own base and use the green beans. And skip all of the junky ingredients. So you can still have your green bean casserole and eat it too. But for us, we just do the fresh vegetables just to keep it simple. Okay. Stuffing, again, another polarizing topic in the world of Thanksgiving. You can cook your stuffing in the Turkey, you can cook it out.

Speaker 1: [16:22](#)

I generally cook mine out of the Turkey. I'm just not a fan of like stuffing it in there with the raw bird, I dunno, just like weirds me out. And our birds are usually plenty salty from the brine. And I have this concern that it's gonna make our stuffing unreasonably salty, like to the point of not being able to eat it. So we cook our stuffing in a dish. Here's the deal. You don't have to get stove top or box stuffing. You can make your own croutons with some crusty bread. Let's say you're experimenting with sourdough and it doesn't quite turn out like you, like you can just cut that crunchy sourdough or that stale sourdough bread into cubes, toast it in the oven and then make your own stuffing that way with Sage and some herbs and some broth. It's really not complicated, so you don't have to rely on the box.

Speaker 1: [17:16](#)

It's pretty easy to find recipes for stuffing. And again, I have some recipes linked on the blog. We can put that in the show notes so you can go check those out. And then the rolls, right, you got to have some sort of bread. Unless you're gluten free then maybe not. But for us, you know, rolls are a big part, not only for Thanksgiving meal, the meal itself, but also for leftovers cause you got to have something to make the Turkey sandwiches with. So my standby bread that goes with Thanksgiving are my Crescent rolls, which I have in my cookbook. The buttery Crescent rolls, they are, I want to say reminiscent, I'm going to say that the canned rolls are reminiscent of mine because mine are the real deal, right? You don't need to have the pop and fresh Crescent rolls though. You just don't need, you just don't need them.

Speaker 1: [18:03](#)

Now with rolls, I've found, you know, sometimes the last thing you want to do on Thanksgiving day when you're in the kitchen busy, is to be cooking bread and worrying about bread rising or baking bread rather cooking bread. That sounds weird. Anyway, baking bread. So what I'll do sometimes is I will make my rolls the night before and then I will just put them in a foil package or some sort of covering and gently reheat them in the oven right before we're ready to eat. And that softens them up. And

they're just, they're still hot and they're fresh. But I'm not having to worry about, coordinating oven space on the day of Thanksgiving. Cause that can be a little tricky when you have everything needing to be in the oven and the turkey's in there and you're trying to take turns with your oven space.

Speaker 1: [19:00](#)

I remember when growing up we lived in a neighborhood so when neighbors were gone on vacation over Thanksgiving, my mom would ask them if she could use her stove, right? She'd be like, can I put my stuff in your stove? And she'd take it across the street and put it in there. Unfortunately I can't really do that where we live, it's a little bit far to be hauling food to neighbors ovens. So anyway, we got to do some coordination and some scheduling with the old oven to make it work. And last but not least, of course we cannot talk about Thanksgiving without mentioning the pie. We always have pumpkin pie. That's our favorite. I don't go crazy and make like 20 different varieties of pie cause my people just like pumpkin. So, I always make my pies a day ahead of time just to make Thanksgiving day a little bit simpler.

Speaker 1: [19:49](#)

And I have a recipe for honey pumpkin pie, which is my favorite. It uses real cream, no condensed milk. You can find that in my cookbook and also on the blog. It's rich and it's creamy and I think, you will love it. So I would highly recommend giving that one a try. But if you make it a day ahead of time, I think pies are better a day after like raise your hand like tell me if you agree with me. I think at least pumpkin, it tastes better after it sat for a day. I don't really like it warm. I like it just room temperature or cold. You may disagree with me. That's cool. But anyway, so I make them a day ahead, three or four and then we have plenty for leftovers. We top it with real whipped cream and that's it. It's pretty easy.

Speaker 1: [20:31](#)

Well relative I think easy is relative, but anyway, it's not complicated and you can see none of the things I mentioned are all that time consuming on their own. You just have to kind of coordinate it out and it leaves plenty of room for leftovers. And don't forget to save your Turkey bones and make broth. So my little routine for that is, on Thanksgiving evening after everyone has, uh, recovered from the food coma and maybe company has gone home, I will pick all the meat off of the Turkey carcass. Like carcass is a weird word to say on a podcast. Does that sound weird in relation to food carcass? Anyway, the Turkey bones, I cook, I pick the meat off the Turkey bones, put it in the fridge, and then I take all the bones and I put it in a big old stock pot.

Speaker 1: [21:25](#) I've actually had to have Christian help me chop the Turkey bones in half at one point because it was so large it wouldn't fit in the stockpot. So I had two stock pots of Turkey bones and I put the vegetables and the spices and herbs and the water, a little bit of vinegar. And then we simmer that overnight and well into the next day, strain it out. And we have loads. I mean usually several gallons of Turkey stock, which is amazing for everything and you can freeze it, you can keep it in your fridge for a week or two or you can even can it and it, Turkey just keeps on giving. So definitely don't forget that part cause that's one of the best parts about cooking your own Turkey. Sometimes even when I'm at friend's house, if I'm not cooking the meal myself, I will ask for the Turkey bones because it's that awesome to have that all that stock.

Speaker 1: [22:12](#) It's so good for you. So anyway, I hope that give you some ideas. You don't have to follow my menu exactly, but I just want to encourage you that I have from scratch. Thanksgiving is maybe easier than you thought. It doesn't have to be complicated. It doesn't have to be this huge overwhelming process. And if the whole idea of a from scratch Thanksgiving is brand new to you, just pick one thing, just one thing to change this year. Maybe it's getting rid of the potato flakes in favor of real potatoes or it's homemade cranberry sauce. That's a really great place to start, but enjoy the process and the reward of serving your family and friends from scratch, Thanksgiving food cooked with love. And don't forget to post a picture of your Thanksgiving spread, tag me on Instagram or Facebook. I'd love to see what you come up with.

Speaker 1: [23:08](#) So if you are falling in love with the idea of an old fashioned intentional kitchen full of nourishing food and rich memories, you will love my heritage cooking mini-class. I've taken three of the most popular videos from my heritage cooking crash course and I'm giving them to you for free and also includes my broth tutorial. So if you're wondering what to do with all that Turkey stock, you're going to really enjoy the tips I have for you there. These videos will have you cooking and eating like a farmer in no time at all, even if you live in the city. Head over to www.homesteadcookingclass.com to grab it and it will be sent to your inbox right away. And that's it. If you have a minute, I would be so honored to have you subscribe and leave a quick review on your favorite podcast player so more people can add homesteading into their lives.

Speaker 1: [24:05](#) Thanks for listening and I'll catch up with you next time on the old fashioned on purpose podcast. Cheese making is one of those things that kind of makes you feel like a homesteading

rock star. It's just magical to transform an ingredient as simple as milk into all sorts of amazing things like butter and ricotta and cream cheese. The biggest issue I ran into when I was trying to start making these things was finding the right equipment and cultures because let's face it, they don't exactly sell mesophilic starter culture at your local grocery store. One of my favorite resources for home dairy projects is new England cheesemaking supply company. They have everything you need to turn milk into magical things. And I have put together a downloadable quick start guide that you can grab for free over at theprairiehomestead.com/cheese I included my favorite recipes in there, a list of the cheese cultures that I like best, and a little discount code to save you some cash on your order. You can grab it at theprairiehomestead.com/cheese.