Thanksgiving recipes for kids

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Peabody's Kitchen has 8 free Thanksgiving recipes kids can make: sides like mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and snap-snap green beans, turkeys built from toast and vegetables, and no-bake pumpkin pie cups. Each has picture steps read aloud, allergy swaps, and every knife, stove and oven step marked for a grown-up.

8 Thanksgiving recipes kids can make

- Recipe: Turkey Veggie Platter · Ages: 5 to 10 · Kind: Snacks, no-cook · Time: 20 min · A grown-up does: the sharp knife
- Recipe: No-Bake Pumpkin Pie Cups · Ages: 5 to 9 · Kind: Snacks, no-cook · Time: 20 min + 1 h fridge · A grown-up does: nothing (a grown-up nearby)
- Recipe: Cranberry Sauce · Ages: 7 to 14 · Kind: Sides · Time: 20 min + 2 h fridge · A grown-up does: the stove
- Recipe: Green Beans · Ages: 5 to 12 · Kind: Sides · Time: 20 min · A grown-up does: the stove
- Recipe: Mashed Potatoes · Ages: 6 to 14 · Kind: Sides · Time: 40 min · A grown-up does: the sharp knife, the stove
- Recipe: Turkey Cookies · Ages: 8 to 13 · Kind: Baking · Time: 40 min + 0 h fridge · A grown-up does: the oven
- Recipe: Turkey Toast · Ages: 5 to 10 · Kind: Snacks · Time: 15 min · A grown-up does: the toaster, the sharp knife
- Recipe: Pilgrim Hat Treats · Ages: 5 to 11 · Kind: Snacks, no-cook · Time: 15 min · A grown-up does: nothing (a grown-up nearby)

Thanksgiving sides kids can help make

The sides are where children do real work on the day. cranberry sauce, green beans and mashed potatoes each give the child the jobs that matter: scrubbing and mashing the potatoes, rinsing, sorting and bouncing the cranberries, snapping the green beans. A grown-up peels and cuts, works the stove and drains the hot water. For a cold side that's mostly stirring, there's frog eye salad, and pigs in a blanket are an easy oven starter.

No-cook Thanksgiving snacks

turkey veggie platter, no-bake pumpkin pie cups and pilgrim hat treats need no oven and no stove, so a kindergartner can do nearly all of it while the kitchen is busy. They make good snacks for the long wait before dinner, too.

Thanksgiving jobs for kids, by age

- Age: 3 to 5 · Jobs they can do: Wash vegetables, snap green beans, tear lettuce, stir cold things, count rolls into a basket · Try: green beans, a turkey veggie platter
- Age: 6 to 8 · Jobs they can do: Measure, pour, mash cooked potatoes, rinse and sort cranberries, spread and decorate, set the table · Try: mashed potatoes, turkey toast, pumpkin pie cups
- Age: 9 to 12 · Jobs they can do: Read a recipe aloud and follow it, crack eggs, make a dessert from start to finish with a grown-up at the oven · Try: turkey cookies, cranberry sauce
- Age: Grown-ups · Jobs they can do: The raw turkey, carving, the oven and stove, draining boiling water, sharp knives · Try: Everything marked "A grown-up" in the steps

There's a plan for the day, job by job and hour by hour, in how kids can help with Thanksgiving dinner.

What was on the table: a little food history

- 1621: the harvest meal at Plymouth that people now call the first Thanksgiving lasted three days. A colonist's letter mentions wildfowl shot for it and five deer brought by the Wampanoag guests. Corn, beans, squash and pumpkins grew nearby, and cranberries grew wild in the bogs.
- Not yet on the menu: potatoes weren't grown in New England then, and there was no pumpkin pie as we know it: no ovens for baking and very little sugar. Cranberry sauce with sugar came later too.
- 1863: after years of letters and magazine articles by the writer Sarah Josepha Hale, Thanksgiving became a national holiday in the United States.
- 1941: a law fixed it on the fourth Thursday of November. In 2026 that's Thursday, November 26.
- Cranberries today are harvested by flooding the bogs: the berries float, because each one has little pockets of air inside. That's why a fresh cranberry bounces, and why it pops in the pot.

Thanksgiving kitchen safety

Every step with a sharp knife, the oven, the stove, the toaster or the microwave is a grown-up's, and Crumb, the Kitchen's tiny chef, says so out loud before it. The raw turkey stays a grown-up's job: wash hands after touching it, keep it away from food that won't be cooked, and cook it to 165°F (74°C) in the thickest part, checked with a food thermometer (USDA). Pot handles turn in on a busy stove. Leftovers go in the fridge within 2 hours. For brothers and sisters under 4, each recipe carries the AAP choking notes for what's in it, like cutting cooked green beans short and leaving raw cranberries out.

Allergy swaps

Tap "Allergies?" on the Kitchen's front page and pick one, and each recipe fills in a swap where there is one: oat yogurt for yogurt, gluten-free graham crackers for graham crackers, oil for butter, oat milk for milk, gluten-free bread for bread, sunflower seed butter for peanut butter and gluten-free chocolate sandwich cookies for chocolate sandwich cookies. Packet foods say "read the label" on every recipe.

Questions parents ask

What Thanksgiving food can kids make?

Sides and snacks are the easiest: mashed potatoes (they mash), green beans (they snap), cranberry sauce (they rinse, sort and measure), and no-cook turkeys made from vegetables or toast.

What can a 5-year-old do to help on Thanksgiving?

Snap green beans, wash vegetables, build a turkey veggie platter, and stir and spread. Anything hot or sharp stays with a grown-up.

What Thanksgiving dessert can kids make?

No-bake pumpkin pie cups need no oven at all, and older kids can bake turkey cookies with a grown-up at the oven.

Which Thanksgiving recipes can be made ahead?

Cranberry sauce keeps in the fridge for about a week and sets firmer as it chills. Pumpkin pie cups can be made a few hours ahead. Turkey cookies keep in a tin for a few days.

Are the recipes free?

Yes. The Kitchen is free, with no ads and no sign-up, and nothing your child picks or makes is sent anywhere.

More for the long weekend: Thanksgiving games for kids to play at the table and after dinner, family game night games, the Thanksgiving trivia family round, and all our easy recipes for kids.

Free at peabody.kids/holidays/thanksgiving/recipes