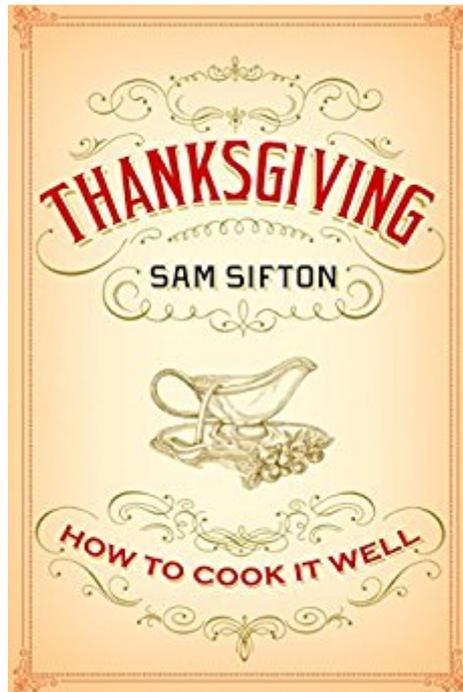


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# Thanksgiving: How To Cook It Well: How To Cook It Well



## Synopsis

NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY EATER.COM From one of America's finest food writers, the former restaurant critic for The New York Times, comes a definitive, timeless guide to Thanksgiving dinner—preparing it, surviving it, and pulling it off in style. From the planning of the meal to the washing of the last plate, Thanksgiving poses more—and more vexing—problems for the home cook than any other holiday. In this smartly written, beautifully illustrated, recipe-filled book, Sam Sifton, the Times's resident Thanksgiving expert, delivers a message of great comfort and solace: There is no need for fear. You can cook a great meal on Thanksgiving. You can have a great time. With simple, fool-proof recipes for classic Thanksgiving staples, as well as new takes on old standbys, this book will show you that the fourth Thursday of November does not have to be a day of kitchen stress and family drama, of dry stuffing and sad, cratered pies. You can make a better turkey than anyone has ever served you in your life, and you can serve it with gravy that is not lumpy or bland but a salty balm, rich in flavor, that transforms all it touches. Here are recipes for exciting side dishes and robust pies and festive cocktails, instructions for setting the table and setting the mood, as well as cooking techniques and menu ideas that will serve you all year long, whenever you are throwing a big party. Written for novice and experienced cooks alike, *Thanksgiving: How to Cook It Well* is your guide to making Thanksgiving the best holiday of the year. It is not fantasy. If you prepare, it will happen. And this book will show you how. Advance praise for *Thanksgiving* — "If you don't have Thanksgiving, you are not really having Thanksgiving. This book is as essential to the day as the turkey itself. It's an expert, gently opinionated guide to everything from the cranberry sauce to the table setting to the divvying up of the leftovers, but it's also a paean to the holiday and an evocation of both its past and its promising future. Sam Sifton's Thanksgiving world is the one I want to live in." —Gabrielle Hamilton, bestselling author of *Blood, Bones, & Butter* — "The charm of Sam Sifton's Thanksgiving is that he proposes that home cooks treat this culinary Olympics like any other dinner party—don't panic, deconstruct your tasks into bite-size pieces, and conquer that fear of failure. Sam could talk a fledgling doctor through his first open-heart surgery. It's all here—from brining to spatchcocking, sides to desserts—and served up with a generous dollop of reassuring advice from one of America's most notable food writers." —Christopher Kimball, editor of *Cook's Illustrated* and host of America's Test Kitchen From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

This is one instance when I want to distract you from the number of stars I give the book, because depending on what you're looking for, the rating is either "absolutely 5 stars" or "not so much." Sam Sifton's *Thanksgiving: How to Cook It Well* has a very clear goal: to make the traditional what-we-grew-up-with Thanksgiving meal the best it can possibly be. Without question, it succeeds. However, it gives no attention, none, to alternatives, let's-try-something-different, or what to serve vegetarians. If you want suggestions on how to liven up the old turkey-and-dressing meal, look elsewhere. Really. You'll be completely disappointed. But oh, OH, it is so good at what it sets out to do. As Sifton writes, "It is a primer on how to face down the Thanksgiving meal. It should provide you with solace as you face the terrors of your first Thanksgiving or the boredom of your 26th." Solace: That's the ticket. Because even if Thanksgiving is the High Holy Day to us foodies, it's a huge meal to prepare for people who are not into cooking, not to mention them coping with stress of the family politics of who is talking to whom, and the subjects we hope Uncle Harry \*won't\* bring up. Sifton promises: "You can make a better turkey than anyone has ever served you in your life. You can serve it with dressing that makes your guests swoon." He has very clear ideas on what it takes to make the meal (the day, really) a success, starting of course with the menu. And this is where the expectations come in: The recipes he provides are for the super-traditional Thanksgiving dinner.

That means turkey, no alternate suggestions. It means the side dishes you can tick off on your fingers -- mashed potatoes, green beans, brussels sprouts, cornbread dressing -- without a lot of options.

I must agree with the author when he writes, "Thanksgiving is not a book for everyone. It is not for those in search of the new Thanksgiving craze, the latest recipe for turkey in a bag, the next big trend in holiday entertaining. There will be no recipes here for ham or lamb, roast beef or swordfish... You will make a turkey. Turkey is why you are here." He has a very strong opinion of what Thanksgiving is and allows no room for deviation. There will be no appetizers and no salad. As other reviewers have noted, if you want a primer on an old-fashioned Thanksgiving with turkey, sides and dessert (AND you don't already have a Thanksgiving cookbook), this might be worth considering (although I encourage you to check out other Thanksgiving books first). If you already have a Thanksgiving cookbook (perhaps *The New Thanksgiving Table* or *The Thanksgiving Table: Recipes and Ideas to Create Your Own Holiday Tradition*), I doubt you will get much from this. If you want recipes for a traditional meal with alternatives for loved ones who follow a vegetarian, gluten-free or low-fat diet, this book is not for you. Although the author mentions fielding questions on the New York website including what to feed a vegan aunt, there is no consideration given to alternative diets in the book. There are also no photos, only a handful of sketches.

As Thanksgiving provides comfort food, Sam Sifton has provided comfort reading in this small, but packed-full little reader. Would I call this a recipe book? Not sure, but it certainly does contain all the recipes a newbie would need to whip up their first Thanksgiving. But it's more than just recipes, and that is what I love about it. The author talks about each component of the meal, and also reminisces about past holidays which gave me the same feeling as when I think back to some of my favorite past Thanksgivings as well. We all tend to have that ideal vision, either from a past event of our own, or from a magazine page or movie scene. We hold it in our hearts and do what we can to recreate it year after year. Regardless of how the food comes out or who shows up at our door, we need to remember that part of the joy comes from our state of mind. This book helps put you in that good place. There are plenty of cookbooks out there with full-color photos, so if that is what you are looking for, this is not that kind of recipe book. There are just a few black and white sketches (the publisher should have put more, they add charm and fit so well with the author). But if you want the feel of a favorite relative or friend sitting with you over coffee or a glass of wine and sharing with you their old recipe box filled with tried and true classics, this is the book for you. Grab a warm drink and

snuggle up on the couch with this book. You'll feel the spirit of Thanksgiving upon you. It starts with, of course, Getting Started - and talks about the basic supplies, pans, and tools you will need. I have been very happy to see that most of what I do is in sync with the author. I was worried it was going to be ultra Martha Stewart and I would think, oh, forget this. But it's not.

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