

## food & dining

# Countdown to a Colorado Thanksgiving

## Week II

DenverPost.com

In the hope that helping our readers plot a course for the most ambitious meal of the year might take some of the pressure off on Thanksgiving, the Food staff went to work a month ago, poring over the family recipe boxes and culling the cookbooks.

We talked to growers and consulted with chefs and the result is four Wednesdays in November designed to define the four corners of a square, Thanksgiving meal.

This week, we take on the dessert tray, with ideas for a finale that won't push your guests too far from the table.

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### Western Slope White Wine Poached Pears

**Make ahead:** 1 day prior

**Prep time:** 20 minutes

**Cooking time:** 30 minutes

This recipe comes from a 1965 edition of The Fannie Farmer Cookbook and is slightly modified with the addition of the apple cider. Tastes great for breakfast, too. From Big Bang Catering, serves 8-10.

#### Ingredients

- 8 cups Colorado apples
- (Winesaps, Rome or Granny Smith are best baking varieties) peeled and sliced
- 1 cup apple cider
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cup white unbleached flour
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons butter
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

#### Directions

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees.

Butter a deep baking dish, preferably not glass.

Toss sliced apples with apple cider.

Mix white and brown sugar, flour, cinnamon, butter and salt. Place apples in baking dish; sprinkle flour mixture to cover top of all apples.

Bake until apples are tender and top crust is brown, about 30 minutes. Serve with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

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### Colorado Apple Cider Crisp

**Make ahead:** 1 day prior

**Prep time:** 30 minutes

**Cooking time:** 1 hour 15 minutes to 2 hours, depending on how reduced the white wine liquid is and ripeness of pears.

From Big Bang Catering, serves 8-10.

#### Ingredients

- 3 750ml bottles Colorado white table wine (Trail Ridge Never Summer Muscat Blend or Wine Chick Winery Table White)
- 1 cup granulated white sugar
- 1 cup local honey (Madhava Clover Honey)
- 8 whole cinnamon sticks
- 10 whole stars of anise
- 5 whole cloves
- 8-10 Bartlett or Bosc pears (firm, not ripe preferred)
- 2 8-ounce tubs Italian mascarpone cheese (similar to cream cheese)
- 1/2 Medjool dates, pitted and minced

#### Directions

In a large stockpot, heat wine, sugar, honey, cinnamon, anise and cloves to simmer.

Peel whole pears, leaving stems attached. Add to simmering wine mixture. Allow pears to simmer 1 hour to 90 minutes; check to ensure they are still slightly firm. Remove pears and allow wine liquid to reduce by half. (Pears and the poaching liquid may be prepared a day in advance, stored separately and reheated for dessert later.)

Combine mascarpone with minced dates.

When ready to serve: Remove heated whole pears and carefully split each pear in half. Scoop out the core of the pear, place on platter or

## Pumpkin Pie

**Make ahead:** Yes, crust discs can be tightly wrapped and frozen. Thaw 24 hours in fridge before rolling out.

**Prep time:** 30-40 minutes for from-scratch crust and filling

**Cook time:** about 1 hour

This recipe from Kristen Browning-Blas makes 2 10-inch pies. The filling is enough for 2 10-inch or 3 9-inch pies (one will be a little less full).

### Ingredients

**Crust:** 3 cups all-purpose flour (or substitute 1 cup whole-wheat pastry flour for 1 cup of the white flour)

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup shortening (Earth Balance Natural Shortening, Spectrum Naturals Organic or trans-fat-free Crisco)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 egg, beaten until frothy
- About 1/2 cup seltzer water or other liquid (orange juice works well)
- 1 tablespoon cider or white wine vinegar

### Ice cube Filling:

- 1 29-oz can pumpkin puree (not "pie filling") or 4 cups fresh pumpkin puree
- 1 12-oz can evaporated milk
- 1 cup half-and-half or whipping cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 5 eggs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- Scant 1/8 teaspoon allspice, ginger, nutmeg, cloves
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

### Directions

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Make crust: In a large bowl, mix flour and salt. Using a pastry blender, cut shortening and butter with flour mixture. Incorporate fats until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Place beaten egg in measuring cup and add water up to 3/4 cup. Add vinegar and one ice cube. Add half of liquid to flour mixture and incorporate with a fork, using a light touch. Add the rest of the liquid and mix gently until it begins to stick together. It should feel like Play-Doh, but do not overwarm dough by too much handling. Gather dough into two discs, patting gently into shape. Using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll out dough on floured surface (parchment paper, wax paper or a Silpat mat) to about 1/4-inch thick. Place in buttered pie plate and crimp edges. Place crust in fridge.

Make filling: With a whisk, hand or stand mixer, blend all filling ingredients. Pour into uncooked pie crusts. Bake at 425 degrees for 15 minutes. Lower heat to 350 degrees and continue baking 35-45 minutes, depending on your oven. To test for doneness, reach into oven with a baking mitt and gently shake pie. If an area the size of a nickel jiggles in the center, it's ready.

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## Fresh Pumpkin Puree

Use this simple method from Cooking Light magazine for mashed or pureed pulp. Three pounds of fresh pumpkin yields 3 cups of mashed cooked pumpkin. Fresh cooked pumpkin puree will keep in a sealed container in the refrigerator for about five days, or in the freezer for up to six months. Look for "sugar" or pie pumpkins.

Step 1: Place whole, uncut pumpkin on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 90 minutes or until tender, turning baking sheet occasionally. Remove from oven and cool.

Step 2: Peel cooled pumpkin. After you've baked the pumpkin and allowed it to cool thoroughly, you should be able to remove the peel with little effort.

Step 3: To clean the pumpkin, cut in half, remove the seeds and stringy pulp with a large spoon. Then process the flesh in a food processor or by hand (using a potato masher) until smooth.

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## Chantilly Cream

**Make ahead:** No

**Prep time:** 5 minutes

**Cooking time:** 10 minutes

This sweetened whipped cream is good on just about everything, especially apple crisp and pumpkin pie.

### Ingredients

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons granulated white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla

### Directions

In a chilled metal mixing bowl, using chilled beaters, whip heavy cream until soft peaks begin to form. Add sugar to whipped cream and beat until stiff peaks form.

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## **Brandied Walnut Pie**

**Make ahead:** Crust can be made ahead and frozen; thaw 24 hours in fridge

**Prep time:** 45 minutes

**Cook time:** 30 minutes

From The Denver Junior League's "Creme de Colorado," makes 1 9-inch pie, serving 6-8.

### **Ingredients**

- 1 9-inch pie shell, uncooked
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons of brandy
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups chopped walnuts
- Sweetened whipped cream

### **Directions**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a large bowl, combine brown sugar, eggs, butter, vanilla, brandy and salt. Beat 2 minutes. Stir in walnuts. Pour into unbaked crust. Bake 30 minutes or until filling is set. Serve with whipped cream.