

YANKEE

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE

HOLIDAYS

in New England



INDEX

THANKSGIVING

What Did the Pilgrims Really Eat? 2

Turkey Cheat Sheet..... 3

A Tribute to Bell’s Seasoning..... 5

3 Favorite New England Thanksgiving Recipes 6

 Roasted Brined Turkey 6

 Homemade Cranberry Sauce..... 7

 Durgin-Park Indian Pudding 7

CHRISTMAS

Best Christmas Celebrationsin New England..... 8

Best Christmas Lights in New England 10

A State-to-State Guide to What to Leave Santa 12

3 Favorite New England Christmas Recipes 15

 French Canadian Port Pie (Tourtière) 15

 Lobster Pie..... 16

 Best Fruitcake Ever 17

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Best New Year's Eve Events in New England 18

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THANKSGIVING

WHAT DID THE PILGRIMS EAT AT THE FIRST THANKSGIVING?

Have you ever wondered what the Pilgrims ate at the first Thanksgiving feast in the fall of 1621? We dig into how similar their menu was (or wasn't) to today's traditional American Thanksgiving dinner. by Amy Traverso

The Thanksgiving meal is remarkably consistent in its elements: the turkey, the stuffing, the sweet potatoes, the cranberry sauce. Barring ethical, health, or religious objections, it is pretty much the same meal for everyone, across latitudes and longitudes, and through the years of their lives. We stick with the basics and simply change the seasonings.



The 17th century village at Plimoth Plantation.

Photo: Aimee Tucker

But what about that first Thanksgiving in the fall of 1621 (historians don't know the exact date, but place it sometime between September 21 and November 9), when British settlers hosted the first documented harvest celebration? What did they eat, and how similar is it to the traditional American Thanksgiving meal?

Here's how Edward Winslow described the first Thanksgiving feast in a letter to a friend:

"Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labor. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which we brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty."



Onions drying at Plimoth Plantation.

Photo: Aimee Tucker

So venison was a major ingredient, as well as fowl, but that likely included pheasants, geese, and duck. Turkeys are a possibility, but were not a common food in that time. Pilgrims grew onions and herbs. Cranberries and currants would have been growing wild in the area, and watercress may have still been available if the hard frosts had held off, but there's no record of them having been served. In fact, the meal was probably quite meat-heavy.

Likewise, walnuts, chestnuts, and beechnuts were abundant, as were sunchokes. Shellfish were common, so

they probably played a part, as did beans, pumpkins, squashes, and corn (served in the form of bread or porridge), thanks to the Wampanoags.

What didn't they have at the first Thanksgiving?

Potatoes (white or sweet), bread stuffing or pie (wheat flour was rare), sugar, Aunt Lena's green bean casserole. Back in 2003, we consulted with historians at Plimoth Plantation, the Wampanoag and English settlers living history museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and asked writer Jane Walsh to devise a menu that incorporated some of the foods that would have been served at the first Thanksgiving. We didn't eliminate any favorites or try to go sugar-free. We skipped the venison. Really, like everyone else who will gather around a table on the fourth Thursday in November this year, we simply changed the seasonings.

To see Jane's menu, plus the recipes for additional historically inspired dishes, search newengland.com for "What Did the Pilgrims Eat at the First Thanksgiving?"



Indian corn at Plimoth Plantation.
Photo: Aimee Tucker

TURKEY FAQ | A THANKSGIVING TURKEY CHEAT SHEET

It's the day before the Big Day and you may have some questions about how to tackle the 14-pound bird that's currently brining or curing or defrosting or simply waiting in your refrigerator. To help, we've pulled together all the essential turkey info into one handy Turkey FAQ. by Amy Traverso



Turkey FAQ | A Thanksgiving Cheat Sheet

WHAT SIZE TURKEY SHOULD I BUY?

1-1/4 pound per person gets you enough meat for the meal, with leftovers.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO THAW IN THE REFRIGERATOR?

Estimate 24 hours for every 5 pounds, so 2 days for a 10-pounder, 3 days for a 15-pounder, etc.

HELP! IT'S WEDNESDAY, I JUST BOUGHT MY BIRD, AND IT'S STILL FROZEN!

Leave the turkey in its wrapper and put in a large container (a lobster pot is good). Fill the container with cold tap water and let it sit for 30 minutes. Dump out the water and refill. Let it sit another 30 minutes. Repeat until the turkey is thawed, then roast immediately or transfer to the refrigerator. It'll still take about 30 minutes per pound (or 6 hours for a 12-pound bird), but it's faster than the refrigerator method and, most importantly, it's safe.

CAN I BRINE OR DRY CURE MY TURKEY WHILE IT DEFROSTS IN THE REFRIGERATOR?

Yes. Isn't that great? You're multi-multitasking! Just use a lighter brine solution (about 1/2 cup kosher salt per gallon of water, plus sugar and spices). If you're dry curing, there's no need to adjust your recipe.

HOW COLD DOES MY TURKEY NEED TO STAY WHILE BRINING?

Below 40°.

CAN I BRINE OR CURE A KOSHER OR BUTTERBALL-STYLE SUPERMARKET FROZEN TURKEY?

No need. These come pre-brined. So if you want to be able to put your own flavor stamp on your meal, get a “natural,” or untreated bird and do it yourself.

WHAT’S THE BASIC FORMULA FOR A BRINE?

That depends on how long you want to brine. If you plan to do it for 2 days, use the weaker solution above. If you plan to brine for 24 hours or less, bump it up to 1 cup kosher salt per gallon of water. Then add an equal amount of sugar.

For flavorings, choose from the following choices, depending on your taste:

Lemons, apples, oranges, onion, garlic, shallots, peppercorns, bay leaves, cinnamon sticks, cloves, allspice berries, juniper berries, mustard seeds, fennel seeds, coriander seeds, rosemary, sage, thyme, savory, parsley, oregano.

You can also replace half the water with sweet cider, hard cider, vegetable stock, turkey stock, chicken stock, beer, white wine, red wine.

WHAT ABOUT THE FORMULA FOR DRY CURING?

Use about 1/2 teaspoon of kosher salt for every pound of turkey. Then add spices to your taste.

SHOULD I TRUSS?

No. Well, okay, if you really like the look of a trussed turkey, you’re welcome to tuck the wing tips under the breast and tie the legs together. But the legs will cook faster if you just leave them alone, and that helps ensure that the breast meat won’t get overcooked while you’re waiting for the legs to catch up.

HOW DO I GET CRISPY SKIN?

At least 6 hours before roasting, let the bird sit, uncovered, in your refrigerator. This dries the skin, which causes it to crisp up in the oven.

WHAT ABOUT STUFFING THE BIRD?

I don’t. In order for stuffing to be safe to consume, it must reach 165°. But stuffing a bird slows down the cooking, which increases the chances the breast will dry out. I cook mine in a casserole dish.

BUT I LOVE THE WAY THE STUFFING TASTES WHEN IT COOKS IN THE TURKEY!

I sympathize, but there is a middle path, courtesy of Melissa Clark of the *New York Times*: Most turkeys come with a flap of skin from the neck. Normally, you cut it off and discard it, but you can use it to flavor your dressing. Just chop up the skin and scatter it over the dressing before you put the dish in the oven. As it cooks, the fat and juices will drip into the stuffing, giving it delicious flavor. And when it comes out, you’ll have turkey cracklings to enjoy.

WHAT ABOUT BASTING?

In my opinion, it doesn’t add flavor and it makes the skin flabby, but if you must baste, limit it to once an hour.

WHAT TEMPERATURE SHOULD I USE?

Most cooks swear by a low-and-slow approach, starting at 450° but then dropping the temperature to 325° after 30 minutes. You’ll need to estimate 12 to 15 minutes per pound, including that initial 30-minute blast of heat. What really matters the most is that you pay close attention to the temperature of the meat, and take the bird out as soon as it’s ready.

WHEN IS IT READY?

When an instant-read thermometer inserted into the breast (all the way to the bone) reaches 160°. You can also measure the thigh, inserted to the thickest part but not touching the bone—it should read 165°.

DO I REALLY NEED TO LET THE TURKEY REST AFTER IT COMES OUT OF THE OVEN?

YES. This is essential for juicy meat. Let the turkey sit, tented with foil, for at least 30 minutes.

BELL'S SEASONING A NEW ENGLAND THANKSGIVING CLASSIC

A New England spice blend classic dating back to 1867, Bell's Seasoning has been making Thanksgiving taste good for nearly 150 years.
by Aimee Tucker

The New England Thanksgiving shopping list may vary from one year to the next (“Is this the year we try to convince Nana she’ll like homemade cranberry sauce?” some of you may be wondering), but there’s one thing we can most definitely be sure of — for turkey and stuffing fans, that list will include a box of Bell’s Seasoning.

One of the oldest spice mixes in the country, Bell’s dates back to 1867, when William F. Bell of Newton, Massachusetts, created the blend from an old family recipe. Since then, nothing has changed...and come to think of it, neither has the box. Immediately recognizable with its colorful, (now) vintage looking label, lettering, and hand-drawn turkey, Bell’s is the throwback that never left.



Bell's Seasoning.
Photo: Aimee Tucker

So what’s in Bell’s Seasoning? Each box contains a savory, salt-free, and all-natural blend of rosemary, oregano, sage, ginger, marjoram, thyme, and pepper with no added preservatives, additives, or artificial ingredients. Combined, the aroma is pure Thanksgiving.

No really, I mean that. When I asked my fellow *Yankee* staffers to weigh in on what a whiff of Bell’s smells like to them, the answers were things like chicken, turkey, stuffing, the holidays, and “something exotic.” And since it was created a mere 4 years after President Abraham Lincoln declared Thanksgiving a federal holiday in 1863, maybe it’s fair to say that Bell’s had a subsequent hand in establishing the official savory, spicy profile of the holiday season?

I guess I can’t say that for sure, but Bell’s has certainly won a spot in the hearts and stomachs of New Englanders, both local and transplanted elsewhere.

To elaborate, a few years ago we ran a recipe for cornbread stuffing, and a reader named Susan had this to say about it:

“Cornbread stuffing? Look out, *Yankee Magazine*—you’re turning into *Southern Living*. Cornmeal is for johnnycakes, not stuffing! My Rhode Island and Massachusetts grandmothers always used a firm white bread such as Pepperidge Farm (or homemade), lots of onions, salt and pepper, and plenty of Bell’s Seasoning, made in East Weymouth, Massachusetts. Now, that’s a Yankee recipe!”

Note: Can’t find Bell’s where you live? You can order a box right from Bell’s online. Love the taste of Bell’s Seasoning in your stuffing but crunched for time on Turkey Day? They also offer up a line of ready-to-make stuffing mixes in both traditional and cranberry flavors. Gobble, gobble!

3 FAVORITE NEW ENGLAND THANKSGIVING RECIPES

ROAST BRINED TURKEY

Following these instructions will yield a moist, succulent bird your guests will love.

You can brine a 14-pound turkey overnight in the refrigerator in a large lobster pot.

TOTAL TIME: 3-1/2-4-1/2 HOURS, DEPENDING ON SIZE OF BIRD, PLUS 12 HOURS BRINING;

HANDS-ON TIME: 40 MINUTES

FOR THE BRINE:

INGREDIENTS

2-1/4 cups kosher or sea salt

1 cup granulated sugar

3 bay leaves

3 cloves garlic, crushed

1 tablespoon black peppercorns, cracked with the bottom of a skillet

2-3 sprigs each fresh rosemary, thyme, and sage

2-1/2 gallons cold water

INSTRUCTIONS

The evening before you roast the turkey, mix the first eight ingredients with the water in your container, stirring until the salt and sugar have completely dissolved. Place the whole turkey in the brine, breast side down, and move it around a bit to expel air from the cavity. Place the container in the refrigerator; then let the turkey rest in the brine 12 hours.

FOR THE ROAST TURKEY:

INGREDIENTS

1 12- to 15-pound turkey, preferably fresh

Extra-virgin olive oil

3 bay leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

Remove the bird from the brine, and drain it well before roasting. Discard the brine.

Preheat your oven to 400° and set a rack to the second-to-lowest position. Tie the ends of the turkey's leg bones together with soft twine. Massage the skin well with plenty of olive oil. (Thanks to the brining, you don't need to sprinkle it with salt and pepper.)

Place the turkey, breast side down, in a large roasting pan. Transfer to the oven and immediately reduce the heat to 325°. Roast the bird this way for about 10 minutes per pound, basting occasionally. Remove the turkey from the oven, turn it over onto its back, return it to oven, and continue roasting for an additional 5 or 6 minutes per pound, basting occasionally.

The bird is fully cooked when an instant-read thermometer registers 150° when inserted into the crease between the thigh and the lower breast, the legs move easily in their hip sockets, and juices run clear when the inner thigh meat is pierced with a meat fork.



Photo: Heath Robbins



Photo: Aimee Tucker

EASY HOMEMADE CRANBERRY SAUCE

Also known as “cranberry jelly” this old-fashioned New England recipe for homemade cranberry sauce is simple and flavorful. Feel free to adjust the amount of sugar to your liking.

INGREDIENTS

1 quart (4 cups) fresh cranberries

1 cup water

1 - 1 1/2 cups sugar

INSTRUCTIONS

Rinse the cranberries and discard any that are discolored. Combine sugar and water in a large saucepan, and bring to a boil. Stir to dissolve the sugar, then add cranberries. Bring back to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer until most of the cranberries have burst, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely, then cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

DURGIN-PARK INDIAN PUDDING

Made with cornmeal and molasses and baked until perfectly wobbly and golden brown, Indian Pudding is an old-fashioned New England dessert like no other. For many, this recipe from famed Boston eatery Durgin–Park is the gold standard.

TOTAL TIME: ABOUT 7 HOURS

HANDS-ON TIME: 30 MINUTES

YIELD: 8-10 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 cup granulated yellow cornmeal

1/2 cup black molasses

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup lard or unsalted butter, softened, plus more for baking dish

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

2 large eggs

6 cups (1 1/2 quarts) warmed whole milk, divided

Garnish: freshly whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 450° and generously grease a 2-quart baking dish, preferably one made of porcelain or stone.

Whisk together the first seven ingredients and 3 cups of the warmed milk.

Bake until the mixture begins to bubble, about 10 minutes; then stir in the remaining 3 cups of milk. Reduce the heat to 275° and continue baking another 5 to 7 hours.

Serve warm with freshly whipped cream or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



Photo: Michael Piazza

CHRISTMAS

BEST CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS IN NEW ENGLAND

In search of the Christmas spirit? From candlelight strolls to Norman Rockwell charm, these ten New England Christmas Celebrations guarantee good food, shopping, activities, and plenty of ho-ho-holiday cheer. by Aimee Tucker

Wickford, Rhode Island | Festival of Lights

Historic Wickford Village in Wickford, Rhode Island, celebrates the holiday season in seaside-style with a town tree lighting, hayrides with Santa, concerts, Elf Parade, breakfast with Santa, and more. Don't miss Santa's daily arrival at the Town Dock!

Santa arrives by boat at the Freeport Sparkle Celebration in Freeport, Maine.
Courtesy of Freeport USA

Freeport, Maine | Freeport Sparkle Weekend



This annual event in bustling Freeport (home to the L.L. Bean Freeport flagship store, several specialty shops, and a bevy of designer outlets) is a whirlwind of holiday cheer and excitement. Signature events include the Sparkle Parade of Lights, Sparkle Express on the Amtrak Downeaster, Jingle Bell Run, holiday carolers, concerts, and visits with Santa. Musical lights shows, horse drawn carriage rides, and the famous "Talking Tree" run all weekend long. Don't miss posing with the giant L.L. Bean boot!

Freeport Sparkle Weekend in Freeport, Maine includes extra special rides on the Amtrak Downeaster. Courtesy of Freeport USA



Stockbridge, Massachusetts | Main Street at Christmas

Celebrate Christmas in New England like Norman Rockwell! Rockwell made Stockbridge famous in his depiction of the town's Main Street at Christmas, and the town pays tribute to the beloved painter each year in a weekend-long celebration of vintage holiday cheer. Holiday house tours, caroling, horse-drawn rides, a visit with Santa, and concerts make the weekend merry, but it's tough to top the Sunday afternoon re-creation of Rockwell's painting, complete with period automobiles.



Celebrating a Norman Rockwell Christmas in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.
Stockbridge Chamber of Commerce

Kennebunkport, Maine | Kennebunkport Christmas Prelude

The seaside village of Kennebunkport, Maine, hosts a full week of holiday cheer each year with the Kennebunkport Christmas Prelude. Including the memorable arrival of Santa by lobster boat, events range from shopping and eating (take your pick from a pancake breakfast, lobster bake, or wine tasting) to special events like candlelight caroling, tree lighting ceremonies, arts and crafts shows, concerts, and much (much) more. Shops offer extended hours and many provide special treats to celebrate the season. Don't miss the famous Lobster Trap Tree in nearby Cape Porpoise!

Kennebunkport Christmas Prelude. Photo: Robert Dennis



Nantucket, Massachusetts | Nantucket Noel and Christmas Stroll

While picture-perfect holiday cheer abounds in Nantucket throughout the month of December, the island's annual Christmas Stroll weekend is when the fun really begins. Starting with Santa's arrival via Coast Guard vessel, the fun continues with craft shows, concerts, a holiday house tour, and Festival of Trees at the Nantucket Whaling Museum. Kid-friendly activities include visits with Santa and the Magical Talking Tree.



Nantucket's Christmas Stroll. Nantucket Chamber Of Commerce/Michael Galvin

Portsmouth, New Hampshire | Strawberry Banke Candlelight Stroll



With a packed schedule of holiday fun, the historic seaport of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is worth a visit all month long, but we especially love the Candlelight Stroll at the Strawberry Banke Museum. Each weekend in December, the grounds are lit with the glow from hundreds of luminaries while the museum's historic homes boast festive decor and all of the good sights and smells of the holiday season.

Candlelight Stroll at Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth, NH.
Strawberry Banke Museum

Woodstock, Vermont | Winter Wassail Weekend

Celebrating the holiday season in unique style, the annual Winter Wassail Weekend in Woodstock features a parade with over fifty horses and riders dressed in holiday costumes and period dress from the early 19th Century, concerts, a Saturday night Wassail Feast, historic house tours, Yule log and activities for children. The shops in town stay open late for all of the names on your list.

Woodstock Winter Wassail Weekend in Woodstock, Vermont.
Woodstock Area Chamber of Commerce



Ogunquit, Maine | Christmas by the Sea



The popular Maine seaside town's annual holiday celebration weekend features a tree lighting, Christmas parade, beach bonfire, polar plunge, fireworks, caroling, shopping, music, silent auction, living nativity, visits with Santa, the "Taste the Season" food festival, and more — much, much, more! You won't know where to begin, but we promise you'll have a holly jolly time.

Christmas by the Sea parade participants in Ogunquit, Maine.
Photo: Nick Papin

White Mountains, New Hampshire | Inn to Inn Holiday Cookie Tour

If your idea of the perfect way to kick off the holiday season includes sweet treats, overflowing Christmas decorations, snow-capped mountain views, and the (optional but encouraged) cozy charm of a New England bed and breakfast, then the annual self-guided Mt. Washington Valley Inn to Inn Cookie Tour is exactly what you're looking for!

The Mount Washington Valley Inn to Inn Cookie Tour features treats like these from the Inn at Ellis River. Photo: Elizabeth Campbell





Boston's Quincy Market twinkles during the month of December.
Photo: Aimee Tucker

Boston, Massachusetts | Christmas in the City

Whether it's a day of holiday shopping on Boston's city sidewalks, admiring the tree and musical light show Blink! at Faneuil Hall, treating yourself to a fancy dinner and performance of The Nutcracker or the Holiday Pops, skating on the Frog Pond, or even sipping a hot chocolate while cruising the city via trolley tour, Boston offers just about everything the urban holiday spirit desires. Bundle up and hit the town!

To see a larger guide to Boston at Christmas, search newengland.com for "Christmas in Boston."

BEST PLACES TO SEE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN NEW ENGLAND

Whether it's piling into the car with a steaming travel mug of hot chocolate to cruise the holiday lights in your own community, or heading out to a larger "destination holiday light spot," the glow of twinkling lights is one of the easiest ways to get into the holiday spirit. Wondering where to go? If you want to venture beyond home for maximum wattage, check out some of our favorite places to see Christmas lights in New England in a big way. by Aimee Tucker

Fatima Shrine | Holliston, MA

In search of a religious Christmas light display? Massachusetts is home to two shrines on our list. The first is in Holliston. Bundle up for a walking tour of the popular annual Christmas lights display at Fatima Shrine, featuring lights, candles, and a beautiful nativity.

Winterfest & Tunnel of Lights at the Connecticut Trolley Museum | East Windsor, CT

Looking for Christmas lights with an emphasis on trains? You're not alone. Celebrate the season with a 3-mile carol-filled trolley ride through the twinkling "Tunnel of Lights." Back at the Visitor Center, enjoy hot cocoa and music while you admire the museum's model trains and displays.



Holiday Light Fantasia | Hartford, CT

Raising funds to benefit year-round programs at Channel 3 Kids Camp, Holiday Light Fantasia is a nightly 2-mile light show that transforms Goodwin Park into a drive-through wonderland of holiday spirit, making it a top spot for Hartford Christmas lights. Over one million lights depict whimsical holiday scenes, familiar characters, and local tributes that shine bright in both lighted scenes and individual displays.

Holiday Light Fantasia in Hartford, CT. Channel 3 Kids Camp

Gardens Aglow at Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens | Boothbay, ME

As part of the Boothbay Festival of Lights, Gardens Aglow features over 500,000 energy efficient LED lights decorating the central gardens and buildings at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens. In addition to the lights, visitors can enjoy s'mores and popcorn and peruse the Gardens Gift Shop. Purchasing tickets in advance is strongly recommended.

Gift of Lights at New Hampshire Motor Speedway Loudon, NH

With more than two miles of lights, this drive-through light show is a recent addition to the list. Featuring more than two million lights and 400 individual light displays (not to mention hot chocolate, s'mores, photos with Santa, the Gingerbread Train for kids, and Santa's Sports Bar for adults), you won't want to miss seeing how spectacular over-the-top decorating looks while being able to brag that you've driven your car through the speedway's infield tunnel.



Gift of Lights at New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon, NH.
Courtesy of New Hampshire Motor Speedway

Fantasy of Lights | New Haven, CT

Lighthouse Point Park in New Haven becomes the perfect place to cruise for Christmas cheer each holiday season. With over 100,000 bulbs, the festival contains 60 animated displays, and it feels extra nice knowing that proceeds benefit the local Easter Seals organization.



La Salette Shrine | Attleboro, MA

Dating back to 1953, when a simple but beautiful outdoor manger was the only attraction, the annual La Salette Shrine Christmas lights display has since grown into a spectacular show of more than 300,000 lights, concerts, and other events during the Christmas Season. See for yourself why so many families consider a visit to the La Salette lights a special part of their annual holiday tradition.

La Salette Shrine in Attleboro, MA.
Photo: K.B. Lindeborg



Festival of Trees | Methuen, MA

This indoor destination is a family favorite. For more than two decades, the sights and sounds of the holidays draw visitors to the indoor Festival of Trees in Methuen, with more than 240 trees, wreaths, and displays that you could win!

Festival of Trees in Methuen, MA.
Photo: Courtney Kovach



Bright Nights | Springfield, MA

"Bright Nights at Forest Park" is the Northeast's premier holiday lighting experience with nearly three miles of lighting displays spanning the traditional, like "Victorian Village," to the childhood-flashback, like "Jurassic World" and "Seuss Land." Santa is also on hand, not to mention horse-drawn wagon rides and activities like "Dinner with Dickens."

Springfield Christmas lights have never shined so bright!
Bright Nights in Springfield, MA.
Photo: Alan Freeman

ZooLights at the Stone Zoo | Stoneham, MA

How about Christmas lights with animals? Here, ZooLights dazzles. Featuring a winter wonderland of tree-lined paths lit by thousands of twinkling lights, you'll stroll through festively decorated Yukon Creek — home to bald eagles, North American porcupines, reindeer, and arctic foxes. Meet the reindeer up close, visit with Santa, and enjoy a magical holiday animal world.

ZooLights in Stoneham, MA.
Courtesy: Zoo New England



WHAT TO LEAVE FOR SANTA IN NEW ENGLAND

Before bed on Christmas Eve, it is customary to set out a plate of provisions for the man of the hour — the red-suited gift bearer known as Santa Claus. Cookies and milk are the traditional treat because it's a widely accepted fact that Santa likes (maybe even loves) cookies, but let's say for a moment that Santa's tired of plain old chocolate chip. What if you were to leave St. Nick a locally inspired snack instead? Here are some non-cookie alternative suggestions for what to leave for Santa in New England, state by state. by Aimee Tucker



Maine

In Maine, we bet Santa would love a big old chocolate whoopie pie, brimming with fluffy cream filling. And while we're sure he'd also love a cold Moxie on the side, milk might be a wiser choice for washing down all of those chocolate crumbs.

In Maine, leave a whoopie pie for Santa.

Photo: Aimee Tucker

Vermont

In Vermont, Santa might be craving something savory and hope for a plate of sharp cheddar cheese served with crisp crackers and a bottle (just one, Santa) of local hard cider or craft beer.

In Vermont, leave sharp cheddar cheese and maybe a local hard cider.

Photo: Aimee Tucker





New Hampshire

In New Hampshire, treat Santa to a local favorite by leaving him a few maple sugar candies that he can tuck into his pocket for later in the trip when someone leaves him a plate of veggies.

In New Hampshire, it's maple sugar candy Santa wants.
Photo: Amiee Tucker

Massachusetts

In Massachusetts (since we're skipping the Toll House Cookies in this non-cookie experiment) it's a peanut butter and marshmallow Fluffernutter Santa craves.

Invented in Somerville, Massachusetts, in 1917, Marshmallow Fluff is the ultimate sweet sandwich treat.

In Massachusetts, leave Santa a gooey Fluffernutter.
Photo: Amiee Tucker



Rhode Island

In Rhode Island, what else could Santa hope for than a plate of johnnycakes (thick or thin – we're sure he likes them both) made from local whitecap cornmeal, washed down with an ice-cold glass of coffee milk?

In Rhode Island, Santa fills up on johnnycakes and a cold coffee milk.
Photo: Amiee Tucker

Connecticut

And finally, for his last stop in New England, we're sure that Santa would love a glass of eggnog from his friends in Connecticut, topped with whipped cream and a generous shake of grated nutmeg. Connecticut is, after all, "The Nutmeg State."

In Connecticut, leave Santa a glass of eggnog topped with fresh nutmeg.
Photo: Amiee Tucker



YANKEE

NEW ENGLAND'S MAGAZINE

There is magic in *Yankee Magazine*, and it can all be yours.

Discover places you never heard of, and rediscover places
you only thought you knew

Daydream and plan your next day trip or New England vacation

Savor both traditional and modern mouthwatering
New England cuisine in your own home



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New England in every issue no matter where you live.

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3 FAVORITE NEW ENGLAND CHRISTMAS RECIPES

FRENCH CANADIAN PORK PIE (TOURTIÈRE)

Meat pies are a staple of Acadian cooking, particularly around the holidays. This version, inspired by the 100-year-old family recipe of Raymond (“Moose”) and Penny Despres, is simple, cozy, and flavorful, and a great way to make use of leftover mashed potatoes. Serve hot, warm, or cold (with mustard) — it’s delicious at any temperature.

TOTAL TIME: 1-1/2-HOURS

HANDS-ON TIME: 50 MINUTES

YIELD: 8 SERVINGS

FOR THE CRUST:

INGREDIENTS

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface

1 teaspoon table salt

10 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, diced

1 large egg yolk, lightly beaten

1 1/2 teaspoons white or cider vinegar

4–6 tablespoons ice water

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour and salt. Use a pastry cutter or fork to cut the butter cubes into the dry ingredients until the pieces are about the size of a pea. Then use your fingers to rub some of the butter into the flour so that it forms flakes; the mixture should look like cornmeal with lumps in it.

Stir in the egg and vinegar; then add the ice water a tablespoon at a time until the dough holds together. Work the mixture into a cohesive ball; then divide it in half (one half slightly bigger than the other). Press each half into a disc, wrap in plastic, and chill at least 30 minutes and up to 2 days.

Photo: Heath Robbins



FOR THE FILLING:

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds ground pork

1 medium-size onion, diced

1 teaspoon kosher salt

1/3 cup water

3/4 teaspoon ground allspice

3/4 teaspoon ground cloves

3 cups mashed potatoes

1 tablespoon milk

INSTRUCTIONS

Meanwhile, make the filling: in a medium-sized skillet over medium heat, combine the pork, onion, salt, and water. Simmer, stirring often, until all liquid evaporates, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in the spices. Add the potatoes and beat to combine.

Preheat your oven to 400°.

On a work surface dusted with flour, roll out the bottom and top crusts. Line a pie plate with the larger crust and spoon in the pork/potato mixture. Add the top crust and flute the edges. Brush the top with milk and prick with a fork.

Bake until the crust is golden brown, about 30 minutes.

LOBSTER PIE

This Lobster Pie is unapologetically rich and delicious — a celebration food that every New Englander should make at least once.

TOTAL TIME: 40-MINUTES

HANDS-ON TIME: 250 MINUTES

YIELD: 4-6 SERVINGS

FOR THE CRUST:

INGREDIENTS

2 1/2 tablespoons salted butter, melted
1/2 cup crushed Ritz-style (butter) crackers
1/2 teaspoon paprika
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350° and set a rack to the middle position. Make the topping: In a small bowl, stir together the butter, crackers, paprika, and cheese. Set aside.

FOR THE FILLING:

INGREDIENTS

3 tablespoons plus 5 tablespoons salted butter
1/4 cup dry sherry
2 cups (12 ounces) chopped cooked lobster meat
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups half-and-half
4 large egg yolks, lightly beaten
Garnish: minced chives

INSTRUCTIONS

Next, make the filling: In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt 3 tablespoons of butter. Add the sherry and boil 1 minute. Add the lobster, stir, and remove from the heat. Strain the juices from the skillet into a liquid measuring cup (reserving the lobster). Set aside.

In a 3- to 4-quart saucepan over medium-low heat, melt the remaining 5 tablespoons of butter. Add the flour and cook, stirring, until the mixture looks smooth and glossy. Stir the half-and-half into the reserved lobster/sherry mixture; then whisk that into the butter/flour mixture. Increase the heat to medium-high and simmer, stirring continuously, until the sauce thickens, about 3 minutes.

Spoon 1/2 cup of the sauce into a small bowl. Add the egg yolks one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add this mixture back to the sauce and stir over low heat until the sauce is smooth and thick, 3 minutes; don't let it boil.

Remove from the heat and add the lobster. Pour the mixture into a medium-size casserole dish and sprinkle with the topping. Transfer to the oven and bake until golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes.

Serve hot, garnished with minced chives.



Photo: Heath Robbins

BEST FRUITCAKE EVER

A modern twist on the traditional holiday confection, this recipe for the best fruitcake ever uses a mixture of dried fruits instead of the standard candied and glacéed fruits. Not only are dried fruits more readily available at your local market, but they also have a deeper and more natural flavor (not as sweet). Ground almonds help keep the cake moist during the long baking time, so you don't have to keep soaking it afterwards.

TOTAL TIME: ABOUT 2-1/2 HOURS

HANDS-ON TIME: 20 MINUTES

YIELD: ONE 6-INCH CAKE

INGREDIENTS

Unsalted butter, softened, for greasing

3/4 cup currants

1/2 cup pitted dates, chopped

1/2 cup dried apricots, chopped

1/4 cup dried sour cherries, chopped

1/3 cup brandy

1 cup plus 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2/3 cup ground almonds

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon kosher or sea salt

8 tablespoons (1/4 pound, or 1 stick)

unsalted butter, softened

2/3 cup brown sugar

1 teaspoon grated orange zest

1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

2 large eggs, room temperature

INSTRUCTIONS

Place oven rack in middle position and heat oven to 300°. Grease bottom and sides of a 6-inch round cake pan with butter, line with parchment (a 6-inch round on the bottom, plus a collar at least 4 inches high to cover the sides), and set aside.



Photo: Heath Robbins

In a medium-size bowl, combine currants, dates, apricots, and cherries. In a small saucepan, warm brandy gently over low heat. Add to fruit mixture and stir to coat. Let mixture cool slightly, about 10 or 15 minutes.

In a clean medium-size bowl, whisk together flour, almonds, baking powder, baking soda, and salt, and set aside. In the large bowl of a standing or electric mixer, beat butter, brown sugar, and citrus zests on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition and scraping down the sides of the bowl at least once. Reduce speed to low, and add flour mixture in three parts, mixing until just incorporated.

Fold in fruit mixture by hand, and scrape batter into the prepared cake pan. Bake 1-1/2 to 2 hours, or until a skewer inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Cool on wire rack until room temperature, about 3 hours, and serve.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

BEST NEW YEAR'S EVE EVENTS IN NEW ENGLAND

The first "First Night" festival took place in Boston back in 1976, organized by a small group of artists who wanted a way to celebrate the new year by staging indoor and outdoor performances in an alcohol-free environment. The event was a success, and the "First Night" movement soon caught on and spread to dozens of other cities. Here's a look at our picks for some of the best New Year's Eve events in New England, including First Night celebrations and more!



Best New Year's Eve Events in New England

CONNECTICUT **First Night Hartford**

This citywide arts festival features wristband-admission events throughout the city leading up to midnight, including face painting, carousel rides, ice skating, dancing, food, comedy, horse-drawn carriage rides, fortune telling, and more! Fireworks welcome the new year from Bushnell Park at 6 p.m. and midnight.

MAINE **Downtown Countdown**

The city of Bangor invites residents to ring in the new year with free family-friendly events, including a variety of entertainment and outdoor musical performances, great food, and a grand finale beach ball drop at midnight in West Market Square.

MAINE

Great Sardine and Maple Leaf Drop

For a truly original start to your new year, head to Eastport for the annual Great Sardine and Maple Leaf Drop from the Tides Institute and Museum of Art. Many local restaurants and businesses are in on the fun, with special menus, entertainment, and late hours. At 11 p.m. Eastern, or midnight Atlantic time, a giant red maple leaf drops to ring in the new year, followed by an 8-foot sardine an hour later at midnight Eastern time.

MASSACHUSETTS

First Night Boston

Started in 1976, organizers claim Boston's First Night celebration is the oldest and largest New Year's Eve arts festival in the country. Today 1,000 artists help Bostonians ring in the new year in style, with button-admission events including a grand procession down Boylston Street, spectacular ice sculptures, and midnight fireworks over Boston Common to keep the party moving.

MASSACHUSETTS

First Night Chatham

Celebrate the new year in Cape Cod style. Button-admission offers theater, live music, indoor putt putt golf, and a circus. At midnight, a giant lighted cod drops at Oyster Pond, followed by a fireworks display.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

First Night Portsmouth

Outdoor and indoor events take place throughout the day. Buttons grant you access to indoor venues for music, shows, and all around fun. Show your button at Puddle Dock Pond at Strawberry Banke for a discount on skating, and don't miss the fireworks over South Mill Pond.

VERMONT

First Night Burlington

Head to Main Street for Burlington's annual button-admission First Night festivities, packed with more than 12 hours of alcohol-free events for all ages. Take in dozens of live musical acts, storytelling, animated-cartoon screenings, live comedy and even a circus. Meals are served at a handful of locations, and free waterfront fireworks on Lake Champlain light the sky at midnight.

RHODE ISLAND

Newport Polar Bear Plunge

If midnight parties aren't your thing, ring in the new year by jumping (or watching others jump) into the freezing cold waters of Easton Bay on New Year's Day as the Newport Polar Bears take their annual noontime plunge.