

Thanksgiving Treats  
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Many tastes of fall have become Thanksgiving classics. Pumpkin pie, cranberry sauce and a moist, golden turkey seem to make the perfect combination meal for a Thursday in November. The Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County offer a free public education class titled “Cranberries, Pumpkin and Turkey” on October 11, at 10 a.m., in plenty of time for home food preservers to get the fixings ready for the big Thanksgiving feast.

Cranberries, though small, pack a powerful punch of flavor antioxidants. The University of Maine Cooperative Extension lists many facts about cranberries, including the news that the pilgrims learned the uses of the cranberry from the Native Americans in 1620. By the time Abraham Lincoln officially declared Thanksgiving a holiday in 1863, cranberries had found a place in the American diet and in commercial agriculture. In El Dorado County, the MFP volunteers provide demonstrations and recipes for making many cranberry delights, from jam to Chutney to the always popular cranberry sauce, whole or jellied!

Pumpkins also have a long history of Thanksgiving duty. According to the pumpkin facts presented by the University of Illinois, the early colonists in America first used pumpkin as an ingredient in the crust of pies. The idea of a pumpkin pie came about after these colonists “sliced off pumpkin tops; removed seeds and filled the insides with milk, spices and honey. This was baked in hot ashes...” Sounds yummy, and almost as good as the pumpkin recipes which will be demonstrated at the MFP class.

The big bird at the center of the Thanksgiving table may be roasted empty or full of stuffing. Many families have traditional recipes passed down for generations for the perfect stuffing. However, the perfect stuffing might cause those families to become very ill if proper handling techniques are not observed. Stuff turkeys loosely, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of stuffing per pound of turkey, and be sure that the stuffing is moist, as this will help destroy any bacterial pathogens by conducting the heat better. Use a meat thermometer to check that the temperature of the cooked stuffing reaches 165°F, whether the stuffing resides in the turkey or in a separate dish. The turkey itself must reach 180°F (measured in the thick, meaty part of the thigh) to be safe.

Learn even more about “Cranberries, Pumpkin and Turkey” by attending the free class and listening to the MFP volunteers share their wisdom. Do you have questions about safe home food preservation? Call the Master Food Preservers and leave a message at (530) 621-5506. A Master Food Preserver will return the call. The Master Food Preservers are also available free of charge to speak to organizations and clubs about food safety or food preservation topics. Just call the number above to arrange for a speaker for small or large groups. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master\\_Food\\_Preservers/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/).