

TOM AIKENS looks back over a busy year and shows you some delicious ways to take the stress out of cooking the Christmas lunch



JOHN LAWRENCE-JONES

Christmas lunch is the most important meal of the year—but don't panic

WE'RE here at last, and what a year it's been. When I look back and see what's changed and improved, I feel very happy with what's happened. We've opened a third restaurant, Tom's Place, which I hope a lot of you will have been to; we've launched the food brand Tom's Kitchen into Selfridges; we made some very important changes to Tom Aikens, where we've changed the front and inside of the restaurant. There were important inspections by Michelin at the end of September, but we'll see what happens when the guide comes out at the end of January. This is very important to us, as a reward for the very high standards we aim for.

But the main highlight of my year has been getting married to Amber. She has been a real rock of support and someone on whom I rely so

much. As the old saying goes, behind every strong man is an even stronger woman and I truly believe this is true.

Who knows what next year holds, but my growing interest in the fishing industry from a sustainable, environmental aspect will grow, as it's been a very interesting journey and something that I really would like to continue learning about.

This month, I'm going to give you what I hope is the ultimate method for Christmas lunch so you can cook it with total confidence. This time of year is very special to us all—it's about bringing family and friends together for an amazing occasion that happens just once a year. For some, it may be the only time family gets together, so enjoy it and have fun. Cheers! 🍷

Find out what's cooking at Tom's restaurants at www.tomaikens.co.uk

A CRISIS-FREE CHRISTMAS LUNCH

TIME PLAN

- Roast the turkey depending on the size (30 minutes per kg). For the first 30 minutes, cook on 200°C, then turn the oven down to 180°C.
- After 2–2 ½ hours, put the potatoes into the oven for roasting.
- During this time, make the bread sauce and cranberry sauce.
- For the last 45 minutes, cook your parsnips and carrots.
- For the last 30 minutes, cook the sprouts, chipolatas and bacon rolls.
- While the turkey is resting, make the gravy.

SHORTCUTS

There are many ways to save time in the Christmas lunch, so you can enjoy the day and not get stressed

- Make the cranberry sauce and bread sauce the day before
- Prepare and peel all the vegetables the day before
- It's very difficult to cook everything and get it all ready at the same time, but:
 - you can roast the carrots and parsnips in frying pans on the gas stove instead of in the oven
 - the chipolatas, bacon rolls and stuffing balls can all be pre-cooked beforehand and go on a single tray for reheating later
 - you can cook the potatoes beforehand as well, then reheat them, too.

Just make it as easy as you want, as it needn't be hard, difficult or stressful—remember, it's supposed to be fun for you and your family.

TURKEY

1 x 8kg turkey (organic)—this will feed 10-plus and have enough for turkey sandwiches on Boxing Day

Allow 30 minutes' cooking time per kilo; for the first 30 minutes, cook the turkey at 200°C, then turn it down to 170–180°C. Take the turkey out of the fridge at least one hour before you're going to cook it, so it'll cook instantly instead of warming up for the first 30 minutes—this way, it'll cook much more evenly as the whole bird will be the same temperature. Remove the wish-bone and stuff the neck end with the stuffing, folding the flap of skin over the whole. Truss the turkey with string, making sure the flap of skin is well tied up. Use any extra stuffing to make into balls.

STUFFING

- 1kg sausage meat
- 12g chopped fresh sage
- 25g butter
- 120g finely diced onions
- 2 cloves garlic finely chopped
- Large pinch of dried mixed herbs
- 12g fresh thyme
- 6g chopped parsley
- 4 egg yolks
- 25g breadcrumbs
- 8g coarse sea salt

METHOD

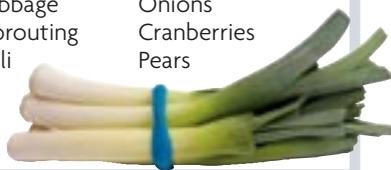
Place a pan onto a medium heat, and add the butter. Once it's just melted, add the onions, garlic, thyme and 2g salt. Cook this on a low heat until it starts to soften (approximately 10 minutes). Add the sage, take it off the heat and leave it to cool. Make sure that while the onion's cooking, it doesn't colour—stir it every few minutes until soft.

BREAD SAUCE

- 1 litre milk
- 60g diced onion
- 2g chopped garlic
- 2g fresh thyme
- 25g butter
- 2g salt

FOOD IN SEASON FOR DECEMBER

Turkey	Forced rhubarb	Leeks
Chestnuts	Primo cabbage	Onions
Stilton	Purple-sprouting	Cranberries
Suckling pig	broccoli	Pears
Christmas goose	Parsnips	
Brussels sprouts	Swede	
All game	Turnips	



DREAMTIME



JOHN LAWRENCE/JONES

splash onto your hands or arms. Cook for about 1½ hours until golden. For the first 20 minutes, don't move them at all, so they crisp up and the cooking tray stays hot. After this, sprinkle in the coarse sea salt.

HONEY ROAST PARSNIPS

2kg parsnips peeled and trimmed, cut into 2–3in batons with the tough core removed.
 250ml vegetable oil
 25g butter
 12g thyme sprigs
 40g honey
 2g coarse sea salt

METHOD

Place a frying pan onto a medium heat, add the oil and, once hot, add the butter. When that's melted, add the parsnips, thyme, and salt. Roast these on a medium heat for 12–14 minutes, then add the honey. Continue to cook for another eight minutes until golden and soft.

GRAVY

3 carrots
 2 onions
 2 sticks celery
 4 peeled cloves garlic
 12g thyme sprigs
All the turkey giblets and neck chopped roughly

METHOD

Cut all the vegetables into 1in rough pieces. During the last two hours of cooking the turkey, roast the giblets and vegetables in with the bird, stirring every 30 minutes. Once the turkey's cooked, remove it from the tray and add the chicken stock to the tray.

Place this onto a high heat or a gas flame and bring it to a simmer, then, with a wooden spoon, remove all the meat juices and sediment from the pan to improve the flavour.

Mix 5g soft butter and 5g flour together, whisk this into the sauce, then turn heat down to a simmer and cook for 2–3 minutes. Add a little salt and pepper to taste, then pass it through a fine sieve into a clean pan, pressing all the vegetables really well.

250g diced white bread
 0.5g cloves
 0.5g black pepper corns
 1 bay leaf
 150ml double cream

METHOD

Melt the butter in a pan on a low heat, then add the diced onion, chopped garlic and cook for a couple of minutes until soft with no colour. Tie the spices in a muslin bag, then put this in the pan with the milk and thyme, and bring it to the boil. Leave to infuse for 30 minutes, then add the bread and salt and bring up to a slow simmer, stirring regularly so it won't catch on the pan and burn. Cook for 30–40 minutes, stirring every so often, then add the cream and more milk if necessary. Remove the spice bag at the end.

CRANBERRY SAUCE.

40g orange zest
 400ml orange juice from six oranges (about 1.5kg)
 1kg cranberries
 0.5g ground ginger

0.5g mixed spice
 0.5g cinnamon powder
 2g star anise
 2g cinnamon stick
 0.5g cloves
 0.5g black peppercorns
 1g all spice berries
 6g whole peeled ginger
 400g granulated sugar

METHOD

Chop the zest into rough dice, then place it into a pan with cold water and bring it to the boil. Refresh it in cold water and repeat the process a total of three times, each time adding a teaspoon of caster sugar. Place all the ingredients into a pan—but not the berries—and add the orange juice, sugar and powdered spices. Tie the rest of the whole spices in a muslin bag with the ginger and cinnamon stick, and give it a little bash to release the flavours. Bring mixture to the boil and turn the heat down to a simmer, reduce the mixture by half, then add the cran-

berries and reboil. Simmer for 10 minutes, then remove it from the heat.

ROAST POTATOES

3kg peeled Désirée potatoes, King Edwards or Maris Pipers
 300ml vegetable oil
 4g coarse sea salt
 1 large roasting tray

METHOD

Place the tray into the oven before you cook the turkey at 200°C, as you may not have the space to cook them at the same time—if you do, then cook them together. Cut the potatoes into large 2in pieces, place them into a pan of cold water and give them a good rinse. Put them into clean cold water with a spoon-ful of salt, bring them to a simmer, then drain them into a colander and shake them well to fluff up the edges. Once the tray has been in the oven for 10 minutes, add the oil and leave for two minutes so it heats up. Add the potatoes, being very careful so the oil doesn't