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## Beyond Tofurkey

Nowadays, having a vegetarian come to Thanksgiving is the least of your worries

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1 2 3 [next](#) | [single page](#)



Thanksgiving side dishes (November 15, 2013)

Lately, Thanksgiving guest lists often come with special instructions. Jane: *raw foodie*. Mark: *vegan*. Edna: *paleo dieter*. Where's a holiday host to start? Here are some tips on feeding the most rarefied eaters on your guest list.

Raw

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In an effort to eat healthier and more naturally, raw- food folks generally prefer their dishes uncooked or, at most, minimally heated. That may seem like a bit of a head-scratcher to the more traditional chef, but serving raw dishes at Thanksgiving needn't be a stretch, said Ani Phyo, a Los Angeles-based raw expert who's written six best-selling cookbooks.

What makes the cut? Nothing warmed over 104 degrees, so serve up that carpaccio plate with a side of raw-milk cheese. That is, unless guests are raw vegans, in which case, all animal products are nixed. But fear not — this leaves a bounty of ingredients to work with, including raw vegetables, nuts, seeds and fruit.

Bringing raw to the table is simple, said Phyo, who urges hosts to think in terms of whole foods. "Processed foods, with artificial flavors and coloring, are often devoid of flavor," she said. "Raw, fresh herbs — oregano, thyme, basil — have a vibrancy of flavor with no need for extra salt."

A natural at Thanksgiving is the raw diet's use of sauces and gravies. Google-search "raw gravy" and you'll see that you've got more options than you'd guessed.

## Vegan

Sisters Jenny Engel and Heather Goldberg have made it their mission through their West Hollywood Spork Foods cooking school and book, "Spork Fed," to make vegan cooking, which utilizes no meats or animal products, easy. As for Thanksgiving dishes — no sweat. Often, you can adapt your existing recipes by using the many alternative products on the market.

"If a favorite recipe calls for cream, substituting almond or soy milk may be all it takes to create a vegan version that tastes exactly like the original," Goldberg said. Her take on mashed potatoes: "Make them rich and delicious with nondairy butter and a milk alternative. Then kick up the flavor with lemon zest and juice and roasted garlic. Or add fall flavor by crumbling fried sage on top."

Spork's vegan gravy secret? Just sub out the meat stock for veggie stock. "We get mushrooms, sage and rosemary from the farmers' market to flavor," Goldberg said. "Then mix in a roux of flour, veggie stock and a buttery vegan spread." For decadent, Southern-style gravy, almond milk and veggie sausage are added.

## Paleo

If you've got a paleo eater on the list, the dessert course will be the trickiest. Paleos follow a hunter-gatherer diet of fish, pasture-raised meats, vegetables and most fruits, nuts, roots, fungi and seeds. What's strictly verboten? Grains (that includes corn), legumes, table salt, cane sugar and anything processed. Some dairy products, potatoes and other tubers may be acceptable based on the individual.

So what's a host to do? Head for a specialized bakery like Sherman Oaks' Buttercelli Bakeshop. "We're classic Americana, which now means being the neighborhood bakery for people who have various food sensitivities," co-owner Val Whalin said. Her bakery cases are rich with organic, gluten-free, vegan and sugar-free treats. Buttercelli's sweets for the paleo set include two-bite nut cookies in honey sesame or maple-walnut flavor and autumnal paleo pies.

With a little planning, some light online research and a willingness to tweak the traditional recipes, you can have a delicious meal that'll make all your guests feel welcome at the Thanksgiving table.

—Bekah Wright, *Brand Publishing Writer*

From the book "Ani's Raw Food Kitchen" by Chef Ani Phyo

1 2 3 [next](#) | [single page](#)



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