

*Real Solutions is a periodic newsletter produced by Susan Stewart, designed to provide practical organization tips to simplify your life.*

## Thankfully, an Organized Thanksgiving

Outside the weather is cooling down and the days are glorious. Inside, however, Cindy feels anything but glorious. The countdown is 3 days before Thanksgiving and Mike's parents are flying into town tomorrow to spend the holiday with them. As she looks around her house, she sighs, not knowing where to [start](#). "How about a cleaning service?", she thinks to herself. But when she finally gets around to calling, she finds out they are all booked through the holidays. She is on her own and that feeling of being overwhelmed takes over once again.

While Cindy is busy cleaning the [bathrooms](#), 3-year old Megan gets a hold of a permanent marker and decides to color herself. By the time Cindy gets her cleaned up, Nicole is home from school and Zachary is up from his nap. So much for cleaning the house.....

Today, Mike's parents fly in from out of town. Cindy hasn't cleaned the house or made the Thanksgiving [menu](#). In fact, she hasn't even figured out what she is going to make for dinner. While Mike is at the airport, she runs out to the grocery store with Megan & Zachary in tow. Relying on her memory, she starts throwing things in her cart. Cindy leaves with a nagging feeling that she is forgetting something, but she can't figure out what.

Thanksgiving day has arrived. Cindy is up early to start preparing the meal. She opens the fridge to find her [turkey](#) still frozen solid. She had no idea it took 4 DAYS to thaw the turkey in the [fridge](#)! Thank goodness she bought the oven bags for the turkey. Or did she? As Cindy starts looking for the bags, she realizes that is what she forgot. She sends Mike out to the store to get oven bags only to realize that the stores are closed. The remainder of the day continues in much the same fashion- one catastrophe after the next. Exhausted, Cindy heads to bed anxious to hit the day after Thanksgiving sales with her mother-in-law in the morning.

The Friday shopping spree turned out to be less than she had hoped for. Busy traffic, long lines and the fact that she couldn't remember the sizes she needed or who she needed to shop for didn't exactly add to the experience. Cindy heads home at the end of the day ready for the holidays to be over.



Tracy is on the back patio with the kids enjoying the fall weather. They are making Thanksgiving cards and napkin rings for Thanksgiving day. It is a tradition the kids look forward to doing together every year. The entire family is looking forward to Kevin's parents' visit next week.

A few days before her in-laws arrive, Tracy pulls up her Thanksgiving menu on the computer and prints out her list. After cleaning out her refrigerator to make room for the turkey, she heads to the grocery store. When she returns from the store and puts the turkey in the fridge to thaw, she puts Alex down for his nap, and begins some of the holiday [food](#) preparations with Brandon. The house cleaning service will be there tomorrow, so she just needs to prepare a few food items ahead of time and she will be ready to go. While the dishes are baking, she unpacks her Thanksgiving centerpiece and [irons](#) the [linens](#). By the time Brook gets home from school, Alex is up from his nap and Cindy is able to read for a few moments with the kids because she is prepared for her company.

Thanksgiving morning, Brook and Brandon are beaming with pride as they help set the table and place their cards and napkin rings on the table. Tracy and her mother-in-law stuff the turkey and heat up the [frozen](#) side dishes while the turkey cooks. Because so much has been done ahead of time, she still has things to do, but isn't running around like a turkey with her head cut off.

The meal turns out delicious and everyone has a chance to share what they are thankful for. After the meal, Mike and his dad take the kids for a "turkey trot" (a little jog) and on a short scavenger hunt while Tracy and her mother-in-law [clean](#) up the dishes. The day is concluded with pie, family games and a movie. After the kids go to bed, Tracy and her mother-in-law [plan](#) out their shopping for the day after Thanksgiving sales.

Prepared for a shopping adventure, the ladies head out at dawn the next day. The stores were crowded but they stayed focused, were able to get some great deals and managed to make it home by noon. After lunch, the family celebrates another tradition of [decorating](#) the house for Christmas.

**For More Thanksgiving Tips, Turn to Page 2!**

# Thanksgiving Tips

- Start a tradition where each member of the family shares one thing they are thankful for during meal times in the month of November.
- If you plan to have your house professionally cleaned before Thanksgiving, book your [appointments](#) now to ensure you get it done when you need it.
- Use up as much of the food in your refrigerator as possible before shopping for Thanksgiving.
- Prepare side dishes and pies ahead of time and freeze. Do the same with a few extra meals so you don't have to spend time cooking during your time with out of town guests.
- If you are [traveling](#) for Thanksgiving, keep in mind that the day before Thanksgiving is the busiest [travel](#) day of the year. Leave a few days before Thanksgiving and come home several days after if at all possible.
- If you are making Thanksgiving dinner, make a menu for the day on the computer. Type up the recipes you will be using, then use the cut and paste feature on your computer to create the grocery list. Label a computer folder "holiday planning", place it in the folder and use it year after year.
- If you are hosting Thanksgiving dinner, consider delegating. Have each family or person bring one or two dishes for the meal.
- Many grocery stores sell ready made holiday meals. If you are terribly busy, this may be a good option for you.
- Buy some disposable [containers](#) before Thanksgiving. Pack up a little "to go" pack for everyone to share the leftovers.
- Frozen turkeys take 3-4 days to thaw in the [refrigerator](#). Don't forget to take your turkey out of the freezer in time or you may be eating Thanksgiving dinner on Friday instead of Thursday.
- Get your kids involved by taking the time to make a Thanksgiving craft together. I guarantee it will make them proud to set these out on Thanksgiving day. One year I painted my children's hands brown and each finger a different color. We made hand print turkey cards for each extended family member who was coming to dinner. Inside we wrote what we were thankful for about that person. It was a huge hit for the guests and the kids! Check out [www.familyfun.com](http://www.familyfun.com) or [www.perpetualpreschool.com](http://www.perpetualpreschool.com) for more ideas.
- Buy a few candles and have them burning around the house (out of reach of children, of course!). Part of holiday memories include [smell](#). Think pumpkin!
- Take inventory of the [dishes](#), tables, tablecloths and chairs you have available. Consider borrowing from a friend or neighbor instead of buying, especially if [storage](#) space is limited.
- Wash & [iron](#) linens a few days prior to Thanksgiving.
- Consider inviting a single friend or neighbor to join your family meal.
- Have some toys, games or activities for the children to do after dinner so the adults can have a conversation.
- Keep a small [notebook](#) of your budget for holiday shopping. Keep track of sizes and how much you have spent on each person in the notebook and have it in your purse during the months of November and December.
- [Book](#) a babysitter in advance for shopping the day after Thanksgiving.

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