

A Tuscan-inspired holiday turkey - an unforgettable feast

This holiday, serve an inspired meal bursting with the rich flavors of Tuscany. This Tuscan-inspired recipe from Carapelli Olive Oil will enhance and lighten up your holiday favorites with the distinctive taste of heart-healthy olive oil. Whether you are entertaining a large crowd or serving up a small family-style dinner, this Tuscan Roast Turkey will be the centerpiece of your holiday table. The juicy flavors and crisp, golden brown skin come from a Tuscan Herb Paste made with fresh herbs and a blend of olive oils.

■ Tuscan Roast Turkey

Serves 16

- 1 16-pound young turkey
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 cup Tuscan Herb Paste
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, crushed
- 2 teaspoons celery salt
- 3 fennel stalks with fronds, rough chopped
- 3 onions, large dice
- 1 stalk celery, small dice
- 2 1/4 quarts chicken stock, divided
- 3 ounces all-purpose flour

Remove giblets from turkey's cavity, rinse cavity and pat dry, set aside. Season turkey inside and out with kosher salt.

Mix Tuscan Herb Paste with crushed fennel seeds and celery salt. Starting at the neck of the bird, slip your hand between the meat and the skin to loosen.

Rub half the paste mix under skin, and rub remaining paste inside the cavity and over the rest of the turkey.

Place two-thirds of the chopped onion and fennel stalks inside cavity. Truss bird.

Place turkey in a roasting pan. Roast at 400°F for 30 minutes.

Reduce temperature to 325°F and continue cooking the turkey to an internal temperature of 160°F, approximately 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Baste turkey often during cooking with juices from pan. If turkey begins to over-brown, cover it loosely with aluminum foil.

As turkey roasts, simmer giblets (neck, heart and gizzard), the other one-third of the fennel stalk, onion mix and diced celery in 1 quart chicken stock until tender, approximately 1 1/2 hours.

When turkey is done, remove from roasting pan and set aside to rest. Degrease roasting pan, reserving 3 ounces of fat to make a roux.

Deglaze pan with a small amount of



chicken stock. Transfer stock to a saucepot, and add remaining stock and broth from giblets. Bring to a simmer and degrease.

Make a blond roux with reserved fat and flour. Add roux to the liquid, whisking well to prevent lumps. Simmer 15 minutes. Strain gravy through a fine-meshed strainer. Adjust seasoning.

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Global flavors inspire holiday dinners

Experiencing new cultures through food is becoming a flavorful pastime, as evidenced by the increased popularity of fusion cuisine, food trucks and ethnic ingredients.

However, among the top-ranked cuisines, homey Italian is still the international flavor cooks are most excited to incorporate into their holiday meals.

To help satisfy this craving for Mediterranean fare, reinvigorate your holiday classic dinner with a new crown roast of pork recipe. For extra flavor, you can enhance the sauce with the addition of aromatic vegetables like fennel and tomatoes or by swapping Parmesan cheese for more pungent gorgonzola.

■ Italian Herbed Crown Roast of Pork with Italian Sausage and Dressing

Prep time: 50 minutes

Cook time: About 2 3/4 hours

Yield: 16 servings

1 16-rib pork rib crown roast (about 8 lbs.)

4 tablespoons dried Italian herb blend, divided

Salt and pepper

1 1/2 pounds sweet Italian sausage, casings removed

8 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided, plus more for casserole dish

2 red bell peppers, cored, seeded, cut into 1/2-inch dice

2 onions, cut into 1/2-inch dice

1 pound crusty Italian bread, cut into 3/4-inch pieces

1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese

4 1/2 cups chicken broth, divided

1 cup dry red wine, preferably Italian

2 tablespoons cornstarch dissolved in 2

tablespoons cold water

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Place pork in shallow roasting pan. Sprinkle with 2 tablespoons herb blend; season with salt and pepper. Roast until temperature towards interior of crown reaches 145°F, about 2 1/4 hours.

While pork is roasting, make dressing: In large skillet over medium heat, cook sausage, stirring occasionally, until browned and cooked through, 8 to 10 minutes. Use slotted spoon to transfer sausage to large bowl.

Add 2 tablespoons butter to skillet; melt over medium heat. Add bell pepper and onion. Cook, until very tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer mixture to bowl with sausage. Add bread, cheese and remaining 2 tablespoons herb blend to bowl. Add 1 1/2 cups broth, stirring to evenly moisten. Season with salt



and pepper. Spoon mixture into buttered 2 1/2-quart casserole dish. Cut 2 tablespoons remaining butter into pea-sized pieces; dot them over the top.

About 30 minutes before pork is done, cover dressing with foil and bake 30 minutes.

When pork is done, transfer to cutting board; rest 20 minutes. Remove foil from dressing; continue cooking until top is crisp and golden, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, drain roasting pan and discard liquids; place pan on stovetop over medium-high heat. Add wine and remaining 3 cups broth. Bring to boil; cook, scraping up browned bits, until liquid reduces to 2 cups, about 12 minutes. Reduce to simmer; add remaining 4 tablespoons butter, stirring until butter melts. Whisk in cornstarch mixture; cook until sauce thickens, just a few seconds. Remove from heat; whisk until smooth. Strain if you like; season with salt and pepper. (FF)

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PURGATORY CHASM the new mystery by car racing aficionado Steve Ulfelder featuring a gritty razor sharp new voice in crime fiction with a local setting, namely New Ipswich and Greenville. And for kids:

SWIRL BY SWIRL: SPIRALS IN NATURE Winner of the 2009 Caldecott Medal for House In The Night (now also available in a board book edition) Beth Krommes lives in Peterborough and has illustrated this new picture book for children by Joyce Sidman that celebrates the beauty and value of spirals. The spiral, a shape that curls around a center point, occurs over in over in nature because it works so well in many ways from a snail's shell to the fiddleheads of growing ferns. Also new this year from Beth is a Pop Up Advent Calendar Winter's Night. The Christmas countdown calendar includes a sticker under each window to decorate the wintry Christmas Eve scene.

STREGA NONA'S GIFT Two of TOMIE DEPAOLA'S best loved characters star in the new book. Strega Nona surprises everyone with a special gift during the celebrations of the holiday season and Big Anthony lands in another silly predicament. Fans young and old will be delighted!



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Sweet and Savory Holiday Bites

A festive party calls for a lively variety of delectable edibles. This recipe gives you some sweet and savory choices that will help spread the holiday cheer.

Scrumptious bites start with simple, flavorful ingredients - golden Calimyrna and dark purple Mission figs from California. Sweet, mouthwatering figs are not only packed with great taste, they're full of fiber and essential nutrients, making them as good for you as they are good to eat.

Get more sweet and savory holiday recipes at www.ValleyFig.com and www.JarlsbergUSA.com.

■ Chocolate-Dipped Stuffed Figs

Makes 15 figs

- 15 Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid Figs
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup brandy (or 1/2 cup water mixed with 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract)
- 15 to 30 small pieces candied ginger, toasted



nuts or chocolate
5 to 6 ounces semisweet, bittersweet or premium white chocolate, chopped

With sharp knife, cut small slit in bottom of each fig.

In small saucepan, heat sugar and water over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Stir in brandy and figs. Bring to a boil over high heat then reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes. Drain figs, cool and dry thoroughly.

Stuff one or two pieces of ginger, nuts and/or chocolate into each fig.

Place chopped chocolate in 1-cup glass measuring cup or small microwave-safe bowl. Heat on medium/50 percent power until almost melted, stirring after every 1 to 1 1/2 minutes. Remove from oven and stir until melted.

Hold stem of each fig and dip in melted chocolate. Place figs, stems up, on wax paper-lined tray until chocolate sets. Decorate with white chocolate or nuts, as desired. Store in airtight container in refrigerator.



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Great gifts for the holiday season

The holiday season is here and the pressure to find that perfect gift for everyone on your list now has an overbearing timestamp.

But fear not. The following list of gift ideas is sure to make this year's holiday gift giving much less daunting.

■ **For the snacker**

Satisfy your snack lover with the gift of guilt-free snacking this holiday season. Slide a bag of Jack Link's Jerky in your snacker's stocking. Made with premium cuts of beef, pork, turkey or chicken, Jack Link's snacks come in more than 100 textures and flavors to choose from.

■ **For the angler**

Make sure the angler on your wish list has the latest go-to lure from Rapala - the authority on fishing - with the Rippin' Rap. This highly versatile bait features a tall, thin bodied, lipless design that cranks, swims and rips its way into the thick, along rock cover, over structure and anywhere in between. The rounded body touts a textured scale, gill and detailed fin that are paired with extra large, deep-set 3D holographic eyes that call fish



in for the bite. And, if your holiday recipient has been hinting at a new fillet knife, the new Rapala Lithium Ion Cordless Fillet Knife will provide uncompromised, reliable fish filleting and carving performance.

■ **For the bookworm**

This year, pair your loved one's favorite hobby with a little functionality in the form of an e-reader. Today, there are more choices than ever before, so e-readers can be personalized to meet every bookworm's needs.

■ **For the amateur chef**

Cooking made easier with a meat thermometer. Many amateur chefs are so afraid of undercooking meat that they often end up overcooking it. Help your home chef take

the guesswork and stress out of cooking by slipping a meat thermometer into his or her stocking this year.

■ **For the hard-to-please teenager**

Capture memories with this great stocking stuffer. Teens can be difficult to buy for. Skip the stress of browsing clothing racks, or navigating the video game aisle, and give them a gift they are sure to love - a pocket camcorder. Capturing live memories is easier than ever with a pocket-sized, portable video camera. Drop this gift in your teen's stocking and they'll be shooting, uploading and looking back at all of life's most embarrassing, amusing or engaging moments for years to come. (ARA)

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Gift ideas for the impossible-to-shop-for person

Shopping for holiday gifts would be a lot more fun - and so much easier - if you knew exactly what you wanted to get for everyone. But there's a good chance your list includes an impossible-to-shop-for friend or family member. Tackle those impossible-to-shop-for people on your list with a new approach to finding good - and unexpected - gift ideas with the following tips:

■ **Head to the public library** and browse through magazines that cater to his special hobbies. Pay close attention to ads and products in the articles. If you see something you don't think he has already, make a mental note to scope out his house or work area the next time you're visiting, just to make sure. Or chat with someone else who shares his hobby and would know if you've discovered the perfect gift that he'll use and appreciate.

■ **Go online and visit shopping sites** like CouponHeaven.com, which features hundreds of niche stores. For example, CouponHeaven.com allows you to sort shopping opportunities by stores and categories, and you can browse the latest specials. You can also find great ideas from coupon codes and



discounts posted for sites like Barnes and Noble for the book lover, Gardener's Supply for the green thumb and even Joann Fabric for the crafty person.

■ **Take her out for a window-shopping experience**, disguised as a walk through the mall for exercise, or as a trip to purchase gift ideas for other people on your list. Pay close attention to anything she takes a second look at - whether it's clothing,

beauty items, household items or even exercise equipment. Make mental notes on those items, and either schedule a trip back to the store to purchase the item she was interested in, or head home and look the store up on CouponHeaven.com to see if any coupon codes or discounts are available for that store or item. Since she's already invested an interest in the item, you'll know it will be enjoyed and used after she unwraps it during the holiday season.

■ **If the person on your hard-to-shop-for list** lives far away, preventing you from looking around his house or taking him window-shopping, then start investigating his life. Call his friends and family and interview them. Check out his postings on social networking sites to see if he's mentioned any interests you could follow up on. Paying attention is key to finding the perfect gift, so make notes whenever you can. Don't delay in trying these holiday gift idea finding tips, because the earlier in the year you start, the more ideas will be presented to you. And if you come across several gifts that could work, write those ideas down, so you're prepared for next year's holiday season. (ARA)

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Holiday gift-giving tips for the teen on your list

Shopping for the perfect gift for kids and teenagers can be tough. It's hard to know what they're going to like, especially without a "wish list" in hand as you head out to the stores. Get ahead of the crowds and make sure you come home with a gift they are sure to love this holiday season using these simple tips.

■ **Don't make assumptions.** Everyone on your list is unique, and just because your kids like something, doesn't mean your niece or nephew will. Talk with parents, look at their hobbies and listen for special interests. You can get a better idea of what they like by simply paying attention.

■ **Let them choose.** Teens will tell you cash is the best gift. But if you want to be a little more personal in your gift, consider turning that cash into a gift card to a favorite store, to purchase music online, or for a hobby shop.

If the teen has their driver's license, consider gifting a gas card. With a gift card, teens can select their own gifts and you can still claim ownership of the present. An added step would be to schedule a shopping date with the teen so the two of you can spend



some time together, and they can pick out that perfect gift.

■ **Let them try before you buy.** Video games are extremely popular gift items -

72 percent of American households have members playing games according to the Entertainment Software Association - but at \$60 a piece, you want to be sure the title you buy is one they'll really like.

Before spending all that cash, rent the game from a local Redbox kiosk for just \$2 a night and let them try it first. A recent Redbox survey found that 72 percent of respondents wish gift recipients could test video games before adding them to their gift lists.

■ **Reserve games in advance online at redbox.com or through your iPhone or Android-enabled device.** If you don't have a gaming system, get together with friends or neighbors and organize a game night to preview several gift options at once. Not only will you please the teen on your list, but you'll make an informed and fun purchase.

And if you're still in need of an idea, just ask. More often than not, teenagers aren't looking for a surprise - they'd rather receive a really cool gift, even if they know it in advance. Open lines of communication will give you all the insight you need into becoming a gold-star gift giver this holiday season. (ARA)

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Find the right gift for the hard-to-please teen

Finding the perfect gift for teenagers can be a notoriously difficult task. Their likes and dislikes can often change within seconds based on the latest trends and fads. So how can you please even the most challenging-to-shop-for teen? Gift cards and cash work, but are also very impersonal. Here are a few gift ideas to satisfy even the pickiest teen.

■ Clothing

Face it, as much as you'd like to be on top of the hot styles that teens are wearing, you're probably several steps behind what's actually in. Give him or her a spending limit and take your teen shopping for some clothes.

They will get a gift they really want and you'll learn about what they like to wear. Plus, it gives you the ultimate veto power over questionable purchases if you're paying for it.

■ Music

As with clothes, most parents probably have differing musical tastes than their kids. Instead of a gift card to a music store, get a list of the music they like and gift it to them via iTunes. Plus, it also gives you the opportunity to learn what they like - even if it isn't what you'd listen to on your iPod.



■ Technology

What teen doesn't want the latest tech toy? Whether it's a new MP3 player, headphones, mobile device or video game system, you probably can't go wrong. If your teen has a gaming system already, a new game is one place to turn. Teens overwhelmingly favor action or adventure video games, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey, and role-playing games have always been among the best-selling, most popular games available. Two new Marvel games from Activision fit both the action/adventure and role-playing criteria.

"Spider-Man: Edge of Time" and "X-Men

Destiny" will immerse your teenage gamer into new storylines from legendary comic book writers - Peter David and Mike Carey, respectively - giving them an authentic, interactive comic book experience.

"Spider-Man: Edge of Time" lets gamers play the roles of the classic Amazing Spider-Man and futuristic Spider-Man 2099 through a high-octane, adrenaline-fueled adventure.

"X-Men Destiny" introduces gamers to three all-new mutant characters forced to choose between siding with the X-Men or Brotherhood of Mutants. Players customize the path, powers and development of their character.

■ Makeover

For your teenage daughter, a trip to a makeup counter to get a makeover can be a great bonding experience - as well as a lot of fun. Depending on how old your daughter is, the trip can also serve as a great lesson for how much makeup to wear and how you should apply it.

Don't believe the myth that teens are hard to shop for. With the right approach, you can find the perfect gift for the most discerning teenager. (ARA)

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No-tech, imagination-boosting toys for every child

Every year, lists fly around the Internet and airwaves, parents line up in stores and everyone talks about what the season's hottest toys will be. All the chatter can make it seem like everyone's forgotten the single most enduring "toy" at the disposal of every child - imagination.

To really fire up a child's imagination it's hard to beat the power of timeless, classic toys that rely on a child's interaction rather than on electronics. Here are five timeless, nostalgic, low-tech toys that every child should have:

■ **1. A classic doll** - Countless generations of little girls have fallen in love with a special doll. This is one toy that can serve many functions, from best friend and confidante to teacher and even role model. If some of today's brash, in-your-face styles of dolls leave you shaking your head, never fear: you can still find dolls that offer contemporary appeal combined with more homespun values. Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, the popular family restaurant/retail store found across the country, recently introduced a line of rag dolls called Butterflies. Soft and cuddly, these 15-inch dolls of relatable characters,



such as a ballerina, princess, cheerleader and schoolgirl, make a wholesome, imagination-inspiring addition to a little girl's toy box.

■ **2. A wagon** - Whether it's an old-fashioned metal one in fire-engine red or one of the modern, SUV-sized plastic numbers, nothing beats a wagon for getting kids moving. It's also a toy that can keep pace with a child's development and changing styles of play. Very young children will enjoy riding as parents tow them along. As children grow, they begin to use the wagon themselves, employing it to transport toys or other children.

■ **3. A building set** - Whether it's plastic, wood, or metal, a building set can fire the imagination of budding engineers. Building

materials that link together have a leg up on old-fashioned blocks, allowing kids to create increasingly complex structures. With so many different construction toys available, it's possible to find a building set for virtually any age or skill level.

■ **4. Dress-up items** - Pretend play is an important way children explore their own potential. Dressing up as a doctor, nurse, firefighter or police officer helps children learn about career choices and adult roles, and facilitates creativity through role playing. Creating a dress-up chest is simple and low-cost. Parents can fill a plastic bin with hand-me-downs, old Halloween costumes and even a few store-bought items.

■ **5. An easel and drawing pad** - There's something about an easel that makes a child feel like a real artist. A simple wooden frame holding a large drawing pad can become the launch pad for flights of fancy rendered in crayon, watercolor and even washable magic marker. Whatever your child's media or favorite subject, putting him or her in front of an easel will enhance enjoyment - and give you a bird's-eye view of your budding artist at work. (ARA)

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