

Holiday Kitchen Advice from Celebrity Chefs

This year, we can welcome people safely into our homes more for the holidays than we could in 2020. So as you prepare your holiday menus, check in with some of the food world's best talents and get some help! Join Top Chef host Padma Lakshmi, MasterChef winner Dorian Hunter, Cake Mix Doctor Anne Byrn, world-renowned chef Daniel Boloud, and Great British Bake-Off winner Nadiya Hussain for their advice on saving time, eliminating stress and wowing your crowd on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and beyond!

SABRINA MEDORA: Hey, food fans! I'm food writer and culinary entrepreneur, Sabrina Medora, and you're listening to *Homemade by Allrecipes*. Each week, we bring you talented home cooks, authors, chefs, and celebrities to discuss the memories and traditions behind their favorite foods along with discussions on what's happening in food culture today.

It's that time of the year, where our minds are whirring with holiday menus and preparation plans and everything that comes with the stress of hosting holidays at home. But listen, we're here to lighten your load. Today, you'll be hearing from pros like *Top Chef* and *Taste the Nation*'s Padma Lakshmi, *Great British Bake Off*'s Nadiya Hussain, world-renowned chef Daniel Boulud, Masterchef Dorian Hunter, and more.

But first up, we have Cake Mix Doctor Anne Byrn who gives me her well-honed secrets for a tasty holiday season.

SABRINA: I'd love to hear your holiday tips and tricks. Let's do it all. Let's start with Thanksgiving. What do you love to put out on the table from a dessert perspective?

ANNE BYRN: Well, I think people get so stuck on pies at Thanksgiving that we've started adding a cake, I highly recommend it. Whether it's a pumpkin cake or there's one in the book called an Italian Cream Cake that you make with a cream cheese frosting and then it has coconut and pecans in it. So it sort of has pie-like ingredients. And yet it's so gorgeous on a stand, that it's just so beautiful. You've got all these kind of brown and dowdy pies, you know? They're just not really interesting looking. And then you've got this just knockout cake. So I love that at Thanksgiving.

I do think around Christmas or any time during the holidays, anything chocolate. I do have several cakes in there that combine chocolate and mint, which is nice, or chocolate and citrus — very different. Red velvet is a perennial favorite, you know, during the holidays as well. I've got three red velvets in the book. One is a standard cake, one's a baby cake, and one is a cupcake. And I've sort of tweaked and had some fun with the frostings. I've got a peppermint frosting on one of them. I make a frosting with mascarpone cheese on another. And I think that it's a nice change from cream cheese.

SABRINA: I love anything with mascarpone cheese.

ANNE: Yes, I do. I do, too. It's so fun. There's so many more possibilities now. And then I think any kind of cake that you can bake in a springform pan and just put on a stand is so easy during

the holidays because there's not all these layers to stack or frost. The cover of the book is a chocolate cake that has puréed berries in it. So I really love using the springform pan to bake the entire recipe and then you can frost it. If it's a refrigerator cake, it could go right back into the ring and into the fridge. Or cookies. And you can make cookies from cake mix too. So I do have a lot of cookie recipes in this book.

SABRINA: Really?

ANNE: Yeah.

SABRINA: I did not know you could do that. How do you do that?

ANNE: A lot of people are really into it. It's just the right formula. I mean, it's obviously not a lot of eggs and not a lot of liquid, and a good bit of fat. Because cookies, if you think about it, are crispy and crumbly. But no, there's some wonderful, wonderful cookies in here. Chocolate wafers, chocolate chips, but also some oatmeal cookies, a butternut pecan cookie. One of my favorites is where you take an angel food cake mix and you make little macaroons and then you sandwich them together with buttercream, with chocolate buttercream. There's a lot of things that you can do with just, you know, a box of cake mix.

SABRINA: That is a very cool hack. And I mean, we're always talking about there's crispy cookies and then there's the cakey cookie. I love my cookies to be cakey. I like them to be, you know, that beautiful gooey in the middle almost. A little warm still. It's my favorite.

ANNE: Yeah. That is why a lot of people bake cookies with a cake mix. And it's crazy, but that is why they do it because they like a gooey, chewy cookie. And the other thing, a lot of people will add, like, a little bit of an instant pudding mix to their cookie recipes, regardless of what it is to keep them moist and kind of chewy and gooey.

SABRINA: This is all like life-changing stuff here. I'm already thinking ahead to my holiday menus wondering how I'm going to tweak everything now.

ANNE: That's right. Well, it's fun because you can just go through the pictures, I think, in the book, and then look at the page number. And that was an aspect of the first *Cake Mix Doctor* that everybody loved was to be able to look at the grid of pictures at the front. I know a lot of children would do that. They go in and pick the cake they want to try to bake, and it's fun. I mean, my books have always, you know, it's not rocket science, but I definitely have been geared toward families and toward beginner cooks, bakers.

SABRINA: And kids can chime in so easily with this because they can be the one's pouring the cake mix ingredients into the bowl, they can do the stirring, they can help. It just seems so much more accessible than baking from scratch.

ANNE: It is. It's easy. You're in and out and some of these recipes, you don't even have to turn on the mixer. Just a bowl and a spoon. It's such great experience, I think, in math and science for kids. Especially if they start baking, like, at 10 or 11. It's ratios, you know, it's multiplication. It's such good hands-on basic knowledge. And it's a skill that they'll have for the rest of their lives if they get, you know, into it.

SABRINA: That's it. I am blaming my lack of math and science skills on the fact that I never baked when I was 10.

ANNE: There you go.

SABRINA: There you go, parents. This is why I didn't do that great in those subjects. But here I am now learning about cake mixes.

ANNE: Well, I'm happy I've brought you to it. That's right.

SABRINA: I don't do a lot of baking, but I will trot it out for the holidays. And my favorite thing to make, which I made a couple of years ago and have been doing ever since, I make a bacon walnut pie. And the filling is nothing but chopped bacon, chopped walnuts, maple syrup, and sugar.

ANNE: Wow.

SABRINA: And then a lovely just pie crust and that's it. That's the pie.

ANNE: Wow. Uh-huh.

SABRINA: It's very indulgent.

ANNE: Yeah.

SABRINA: How would one maybe play around with that and turn it into a cake so I can surprise the fam this year?

ANNE: Bacon, walnuts — and what else did you say? Maple syrup?

SABRINA: Maple syrup, a little brown sugar — and I sauté the bacon. And then I cook the walnuts — I chop them and I cook them with the bacon so they get all nice and fatty and savory. And I just drench the whole mixture in maple syrup, a little brown sugar, and then I just pile it into a baking tin. And I have the crust in there. And then a crust on top. And I make a little decoration and that's it.

ANNE: It's got a little of the — it hits all of the notes, doesn't it? It's got the salty...

SABRINA: It does. It's so indulgent. And I love stuff that is, like, chewy and texture-y for sure.

ANNE: So the difference then in, like, in a cake, all those flavors, they're so interesting. And the crunch and the texture and the salt. You know, I don't want to lose that. So I would probably really work at making that a garnish. You could do it in a Bundt pan, but such an easy garnish on those is just to prep it with oil and flour? Prep it like you're going to pour in batter. But then you take your walnuts and finely chop them and you scatter them on the bottom of the pan. OK? And then you could use a recipe in my book, like the almond cream cheese pound cake, for example. And you could add a little bit of maple extract. Pure maple extract, that tiny bit. It's very strong, like eighth of a teaspoon or something. Tiny bit to get some maple going into that cake. Or you

could use real maple syrup. But the problem is baking a cake with maple syrup. It doesn't come through in a mapley kind of way. You know? It kind of gets lost. So then I would bake the cake and then when you flip it, you're going to have this crown of walnuts because they've been baked on the bottom, and they're going to be super crunchy and delicious because you've just flipped it. And I think I would just use the bacon. That's the garnish. That's the nuts on the cake. You've got a little maple undertone in the cake. And then I probably would do a maple glaze. Just maple syrup, a little powdered sugar in that. Maybe a little bit of coconut milk or cream, just something to thin it out. And then you could add a tiny bit of maple extract to make it more mapley. And then I would drizzle that on the cake, but really use the bacon as the garnish. And I think that could be good because when you sliced into it, you'd have the crunchy bacon, you'd have a mapley kind of glaze, you'd have the walnuts that have been baked into the crust on the cake. It could be kind of good.

SABRINA: Yeah. Do you use oil in that almond pound cake?

ANNE: Yeah, you use oil. Yeah, It's cake mix, cream cheese, oil, eggs. If it's not number one fan favorite, it's number two.

SABRINA: What if someone wanted to use a little bacon grease with the oil? Like take some of the oil out, add a little bacon fat instead? Does that work? Or does that mess up the ratios?

ANNE: Yeah, I don't know if I do that to the cake. You can do it in the pan? You could actually — all right, so here's something crazy. You could actually fry the bacon in a cast iron skillet, take the bacon out, crumble it. It's over here crispy. You've got bacon grease in your cast iron skillet. Pour it out, but leave some in there. OK? Put your walnuts on the bottom of the pan like you're making a pineapple upside-down cake.

SABRINA: I see what you're saying.

ANNE: See where I'm going? Make your almond cream cheese batter. Boom with the maple added. Boom. Then you could make the maple glaze. Or you — Ohh. It's kind of — you're kind of crossing meals here. It's kind of like the bacon and the pancakes thing. So then serve it as an upside-down skillet cake. Turn it upside down and you've got the crunchy walnuts. You've got the flavor of the bacon grease from the pan. You got the cake. You got more bacon on top. And you could or could not do the maple glaze or just drizzle maple syrup over it.

SABRINA: That is going to be a fan favorite in my house.

ANNE: Put that on Instagram and I'll — tag me.

SABRINA: Yes. Yes. OK. And then for your next book, we'll call it the Sabrina — it'll be on the cover.

ANNE: Right. The Sabrina Skillet Cake.

SABRINA: I love it. Sabrina Skillet cake. I've always wanted a dessert that's just, like, mine to, like, hand down to my kids and grandkids someday. I think this might be it.

ANNE: I think that that is unique enough to be yours. They'll think it's like cornbread, you know?

SABRINA: Yes.

ANNE: And that'll be part of the surprise because it's a cake. Yeah. And you could put a little bit of yellow cornmeal in there if you wanted to, but you don't have to. Because the skillet really makes really beautiful cakes. They get nice and crispy on the edges. A 12-inch cast iron skillet is what you need. Yeah.

SABRINA: I'm going to do that cause the one big piece of feedback I got from everyone besides myself and my husband was that, 'wow this just a lot of walnuts and bacon.' I'm like, 'and what's your point?' That's the point of the pie. Walnuts and bacon. What's your point? They're like, well it's a lot of it. I'm like, really? So maybe if I add cake to it.

ANNE: I think it could improve it, actually. I do. Almond cream cheese pound cake. Yeah. You got the recipe there.

SABRINA: Do you have any fun tips for just making baking easier around the holidays? You know? Because it's so stressful, especially for the person that is in charge of the kitchen that day or that week.

ANNE: Yeah, well, I'd say if possible, if these are gifts for other people if you can plan ahead, and so many cakes freeze really well. In fact, we baked all these cakes for photography for this book. And I don't know what I would have done without my chest freezer to stash these cakes while I could bake some more and stash some more. So bake ahead, wrap them well in foil, Ziploc bag, whatever, get them in the freezer. And a lot of cakes really improve in texture. Especially the pound cakes really improve in texture if they have been frozen.

Look to easy glazes. You know, don't try to get into frosting. So look at that — I have a whole chapter on glazes. Just glaze the cake, go to, like, a Michael's kind of store and buy cake rounds. cardboard cake rounds and actually put the cake on that round. You know, and you can get clear cellophane and you can sweep it up over the round in the cake and put a ribbon on it and you're done. And those are, kind of, gifts that could be made ahead of time.

As far as, like, cookies and bars and things that you might be baking, you know, with children, whatever? You can make a lot of these doughs ahead of time and freeze the dough, which is super helpful, and then pull it out, put it in the fridge to thaw. We do that a lot. Especially when you're going to decorate cookies, too. And I do have a recipe for, like, rolled sugar cookies in here, believe it or not, with a cake mix. And it's really easy to work with it's staging, I guess. Staging what you're going to bake for the holidays, thinking ahead, plan it, stage it. Much like you know, a restaurant kitchen or a pastry chef might do. They could never make everything at the last minute and we probably shouldn't try to either.

SABRINA: I think that is the biggest downfall is we think to ourselves, 'oh, Thanksgiving's tomorrow. I should probably get started on that pie dough.' I don't know, I might be speaking from a little personal experience here.

ANNE: No, no, I think you're exactly right. I think some of your best ideas can come at the last minute, you know? If you plan too much about what you're going to eat and bake, you don't leave any room for serendipity. So, but you can make everybody else in your family crazy if you leave everything to the last minute and I've done that as well.

SABRINA: Don't be upset if something goes wrong cause it's just making way for something else to go more right.

ANNE: And maybe for the holidays, invest in a new pan. Something as simple as a new shape of a Bundt, like a heritage or a magnolia pan? They have different grooves and whatever. And maybe it's the same old cake you always make. It's the pound cake that everybody knows you for but this year, you put it in a different pan, which is nice. It's a nice change.

SABRINA: Right. And it's such an easy way to have people say, wow, when you bring to the table.

ANNE: Yes, definitely, or give it as a gift, I think to have a cake in the freezer is a wonderful thing. You know, bringing somebody a whole cake really says a lot, doesn't it? I mean, it's very celebratory. And that's what I've always loved about cakes. Even if they start with a cake mix. They're just so much more fun than a pie, you know? It makes you want to celebrate. And whoever you share them with, it's an occasion.

SABRINA: Right. And tell me, how long can these cakes stay in the freezer or stay in the fridge once they're made?

ANNE: Freezer — it depends on the type of freezer. If it's just the freezer for your refrigerator, you know, a week or so because it's opened and shut so many times. But if it's a chest freezer, and upright in another part, maybe in the basement of your house? Oh, boy. Three to six months. Really depends on how many times it's opened and how well you wrap them. But you can definitely — especially like a pound cake. Things that do not have a frosting on them, they keep really well.

SABRINA: And so you can always whip up the frosting later if you want to keep the cake in there for a while, bring it out...

ANNE: Definitely. If you want to pre-bake for the holidays, make the cakes, freeze them, take them out, open up the pack, open up the foil, and let them thaw at room temperature on the counter, sort of able to breathe. You know, you've opened up the packaging, let them breathe. And then once they're thawed, then you can glaze them, and wrap them for giving.

SABRINA: And how would you recommend that we wrap these for the freezer. Do you have any tips on that?

ANNE: I love using the boards. That's why I mentioned getting some cake rounds. But if you don't have that? Save cardboard from boxes that you get, we hope we get a lot of those. And actually, cut it into — this is where kids can kind of help you maybe — cut it into sort of 12- or 14-inch squares or rounds; squares are easier to cut. And you've made your own cake round or cake square for freezing. You could put a parchment or wax paper on that and your cake goes on

that. And then I would place that on heavy-duty foil and wrap the foil up around the cake, you know, and crimp it. So it's sealed and yet it's not pressing onto the cake. If you don't want to use foil, you can wrap it in parchment paper, plastic wrap, and put it inside of a Ziploc bag, get some of the big ones, the big two-gallon bags. Those are great. You can recycle those. You can keep using those again and again. I do, rinse them out, and let them dry. But those are really great for freezing, an entire cake or freezing like a 9x13 pan of cake, as well. And then some cakes — if it's for a party — you can freeze it right in the pan. I've done that too.

SABRINA: So basically, order your Christmas presents online. Take the boxes that your Christmas presents come in. Get your kids to cut those boxes up so you don't have to bother with breaking them down and recycling them. Make it a whole fun activity. They can draw on the boxes. They can cover them with foil.

ANNE: They could decorate those.

SABRINA: I think we just solved every parent's problems for the holidays. How do I keep my kids occupied while I'm baking? Perfect.

ANNE: Yes. Perfect.

SABRINA: Next up on today's episode, from earlier this season, Martie Duncan chats with *Great British Bake-Off* winner Nadiya Hussain, about a different kind of celebration during the holidays — the Christmas birthday!

MARTIE DUNCAN: You are a Christmas baby, right?

NADIYA HUSSAIN: Yes, yeah.

MARTIE: So we are a show that we love to talk about family traditions and things that you do when you get the family together. So what are some of those traditions like and what would be like a dish that would be like a signature dish that you would make for Christmas or your birthday?

NADIYA: So we don't celebrate Christmas. But it is the only time of year where the entire family stops, nobody's working.

MARTIE: Right.

NADIYA: So that is an excuse for us to spend some time together, especially on Christmas Day, because actually nobody's got an excuse — when I say, can you come around for my birthday, nobody can say, well actually I'm busy because they're not. They don't celebrate Christmas, my family don't celebrate Christmas. They've got nowhere to be so where could you possibly be if you're not at my house?

MARTIE: Right.

NADIYA: No. There's no hiding from me on Christmas Day. Oh, no. So I've got a sister whose birthday is on Christmas Eve, so I've never had a birthday on my own. So we always have a joint birthday on my birthday.

MARTIE: Wow.

NADIYA: We tend to have our entire family over and everybody cooks a little bit of something. So it's, it's a very kind of multicultural affair. So, you know, my sister who's married to a Punjabi man, she would make a biryani. So she would make...

MARTIE: Oh, I love biryani.

NADIYA: ...Yeah, like a biryani or a haleem. So she'll make different things. And my mom will always make a chicken korma, which is very traditional when you're celebrating. I always make the cake, always. I always make my spicy prawns, which might — and it's like, this is the least Christmas-Christmas dinner that you could get.

MARTIE: Sounds wonderful, though. It sounds absolutely wonderful. And you have all those dishes that are everybody's specialty.

NADIYA: Yeah. And then my sister-in-law whose English, she always makes a cauliflower cheese and she always comes in disappointed, as if she's like, 'oh, this is so bland.' And I'm like, no, no, no, it works. It really works. And so we have like cauliflower cheese, we have spicy prawns, we have a little bit of everything. And I always make the cake. So I, to this day, still make birthday cake for me and my sister.

MARTIE: Oh, how wonderful. I love that. That is wonderful. Now what is your birthday cake? What do you make? Which kind?

NADIYA: Well, my sister — so I never make something I like because I make a lot of cakes. So I tend to not eat as much cake. But my sister loves toffee. So every year I make her a kind of speculoos-type toffee, speculoos-spiced cake with a toffee icing.

MARTIE: OK, Nadiya you're going to have to tell me what speculoos is.

NADIYA: So speculoos is a spice mix. I think it's from the Netherlands. I can't remember anymore. I've forgotten completely but it's like you get — it's like cinnamon, nutmeg, you've got...

MARTIE: Maybe clove?

NADIYA: ...Cloves. You've got a little bit of clove in there. You've got all sorts of kind of like...

MARTIE: So the warm spices.

NADIYA: Kind of warm Christmassy spices that you would normally get.

MARTIE: Oh, lovely.

NADIYA: Have you ever heard of a lotus biscuit?

MARTIE: No.

NADIYA: Right. So it's a very kind of — there's these lotus biscuits that my dad used to have at his restaurant, and they would serve them on the side of his coffee.

MARTIE: Cookie. Biscuit is a cookie?

NADIYA: Yes.

MARTIE: We say, cookie. And y'all say biscuit.

NADIYA: Yes. Exactly.

MARTIE: And a biscuit for us is something very, very different.

NADIYA: A biscuit for you is savory, right?

MARTIE: Yes. Well, it can be sweet, but we frown at that. Yeah biscuits for us are flour, butter, buttermilk.

NADIYA: Yup.

MARTIE: And they're usually rolled or punched out and baked.

NADIYA: Yeah.

MARTIE: Yeah, but biscuits for y'all are...

NADIYA: Cookies.

MARTIE: OK so, so speculoos is the warm spices. So you make that with a bit of — did you say toffee?

NADIYA: Yes. So I make like a toffee-flavored icing, Swiss meringue buttercream for her and then we do loads of layers. The kind of cake that you eat big slabs of and make it as high as physically possible, and that's her favorite cake to eat.

MARTIE: It sounds wonderful. Now, Americans don't do a lot of Swiss buttercreams, that Swiss meringue buttercream. But, basically, what it is, is you take the hot sugar and add it to your — like a traditional buttercream and it makes it fluffier and lighter, right?

NADIYA: Yeah. So it's a liquid sugar. So your water and sugar boiled to a 152, I think it is. And then add it to whipped egg whites and then you kind of gently pour that in and as soon as — you have to wait a long time to whip that till it's cooled down to kind of body temperature. And then you add all the butter, like when I say all the butter, I mean all the butter that you can physically imagine. Like, we're talking a few kilos, especially if I'm making a cake, but a lot of butter. It is

the most velvety, smooth, sweet icing. And it's just it, it's the way it moves, the way it moves to ice the cake is just — it's beautiful. It's like a dance.

MARTIE: I am fascinated with that. And in America, unless you're really an experienced baker, you don't see people doing that a lot. But in Britain, in the UK, that's pretty standard, isn't it? Like most people would. You would either have that or get that somewhere for a birthday or something, right?

NADIYA: I don't know if Swiss meringue buttercream is that standard.

MARTIE: OK.

NADIYA: Yeah, I don't think it's that standard, but we have lots of kind of, like, cream cheese icing, which I know is quite common in America.

MARTIE: Which, we do. Yeah, we do.

NADIYA: And a buttercream. I think a standard kind of buttercream icing is quite...

MARTIE: But the Swiss meringue buttercream is a lot more stable, right? It holds better than a regular buttercream, right?

NADIYA: Yes. So it cools faster. So when it cools, it cools quite hard. So it means that if you're doing a quite tall cake with a bit of structure, that's the kind of buttercream you want to use, because with a standard buttercream, you still kind of stick your finger in and create a massive dent. Whereas with a Swiss meringue buttercream, you leave it in the fridge for a couple of hours. It's pretty sturdy.

SABRINA: You're listening to *Homemade*. When we return, we have award-winning chef Daniel Boulud humbly sharing his worst Thanksgiving mistakes. We also have *Top Chef* and *Taste the Nation* host Padma Lakshmi providing history on her own family's holiday traditions, and *Masterchef* winner Dorian Hunter gives some sage advice on whether or not to try that new recipe for your big gathering. All that and much more, after the break.

Thanks for listening to *Homemade*! I'm Sabrina Medora and today I'm sharing tips from previous guests on how to take the stress out of your holiday meal prep. Recently, renowned chef Daniel Boulud answered questions from you, our *Homemade* listeners, about how to best entertain for the holidays. And listen, before you sweat your Thanksgiving menu, take solace in Chef Boulud's story about how even he isn't always perfect when it comes to turkey.

CALLER: This is Jim. My wife died a year ago and I do all the cooking now for the family gatherings. I'm looking for suggestions to reduce the hectic situation of fixing the turkey and all the sides. What can be cooked ahead? Frozen? Or any tips for reducing the tension experienced during the preparation for Thanksgiving and Christmas? Thank you very much.

DANIEL BOULUD: Well, I mean, if he was living in New York I would tell him to buy the box, which has soup to nuts inside from my Daniel Boulud kitchen. But one thing, for example, macaroni and cheese. If you want to do macaroni and cheese, do that the day before. No sweat.

You just have to bake it and serve it. I love sweet potato purée or pumpkin purée. And what I do is add also some orange juice inside and some spice and even banana inside a little bit and also a little bit of cream. So that is blend like that. Of course, you cook the sweet potatoes in a little bit of water and cream together until it is tender and with some grated orange peel inside and cinnamon and a little bit of allspice powder or clove and a banana — apple inside, apple and banana. And then you blend that, you make a purée, smooth purée with that. And that's quite delicious. What else? I will propose spinach or Swiss chard, or kale or braising greens. That can be blanched in salted water ahead, squeezed, seasoned. And maybe pre-sauté, a little bit with some mushrooms, and a little bit of onion — sliced onion that you sweat well, and then you add all your greens in it. You season and you just give a quick toss. You put it in a pan and you chill it right away. And then the next day you just warm that up in the oven. So basically try to do as much as possible, precook perfectly to be reheated only. Not even recooked, just reheated. That's very important. And I also like Brussel sprouts. You can blanch them again the day before and you can butter them the next day after. So all this task of preparing the vegetables and maybe par cooking the vegetables is very important because you save a lot of time. Cranberry sauce should be done in advance, of course.

SABRINA: How many days do you think people can start preparing for Thanksgiving in advance?

DANIEL: Two days. And what you do the days before is the first day you clean all the vegetables, you prepare yourself to cook the sides the next day, and prep the turkey also. That you can do two days ahead also. So by the time of the day of the party is effortless because everything is ready. To be cooked or baked.

SABRINA: So you can wash your vegetables, chop everything, get everything ready.

DANIEL: Yeah. And usually Thanksgiving nobody works so you have the whole day to prep and you don't need to eat before 2 o'clock in the afternoon or 3.

The worst story I have about entertaining at a friend's home. It was Thanksgiving and I was invited as a friend. And he had a new house and his oven was broken. And, you know, I was not discouraged. I knew how to cook with anything. I looked outside and he had a big barbeque with gas. And that was the only source of heat I had. It was in the winter in New York. There was snow outside. So I light up the barbeque. I see it's working well. Now it didn't have any equipment to cook with. So I had an aluminum pan — one of those disposable aluminums you find in the supermarket, and I had my turkey down and butter and buttered turkey and beautiful. And I had the barbeque on. So I put the turkey inside. I closed the top and then I go into the house. And the barbeque was outside on a little bit of a terrace he had where he had a little space for the barbeque. And we were all having cocktails and talking and I knew it and my turkey was cooking. I was not worried. And then at one point, I looked through the window and I see flames of like five-foot-tall flames coming out of the barbeque. And actually, the aluminum pan melted and all the butter caught on fires and all that...

SABRINA: Oh, my God.

DANIEL: All the fat of the turkey. Basically, the turkey was on fire.

SABRINA: Oh, my God. How did — so the foil just completely melted?

DANIEL: Yeah, the whole thing. It ruined the whole turkey. We never had dinner.

SABRINA: Oh, my God. Well, I hope you had extra cocktails.

DANIEL: Oh, yeah, yeah. No, we had plenty of cocktails. And we ate the garnish and all that. So talk about sometimes you think you can improvise, but you have to be very careful when you improvise.

SABRINA: I'll say. Oh, that is hilarious. I know that this year people are going to be adjusting their menus for some dietary restrictions. You know, some people are lactose intolerant and gluten-free. Do you have any recommendations on how to reduce the stress of putting together a menu that has to please multiple people and preferences?

DANIEL: Of course. I think today we more and more have so many substitutes. I have a daughter who is lactose intolerant. I have a daughter who is gluten-free. I mean, for milk, you can use almond milk, you can use coconut milk, you can use goat milk, for that matter, because I think my daughter can take goat but cannot take cows' milk. Soy milk, as well.

For the gluten — even Thomas Keller created a blend of starch that can replace gluten, in a way or flour. And the recipes have been adapted around that as well. And I think more and more chefs are helping, coming up with recipes gluten-free. And that's great.

SABRINA: Would you say to just cook the whole menu with the idea of those restrictions...

DANIEL: Oh, yeah.

SABRINA: Or those adjustments instead of doing...

DANIEL: Yeah. No, at the restaurant we do the adjustment because it's maybe one table out of 20 that may have an issue. But at home, if you know that you have a guest with that. It's better to try to compose a meal avoiding those so you don't even make a case out of it.

SABRINA: Right. That makes sense.

DANIEL: It's important.

SABRINA: One of my favorite parts about the holidays is putting my own spin on traditional feasts. Don't be afraid to mix things up. Take, for example, how Padma Lakshmi travels the world from her Thanksgiving table.

One of the things that I wanted to chat with you about today was your own holiday favorites and traditions. Every family has their own special recipes and every person has their favorite dish on the table for Thanksgiving or Christmas — I would love to kind of hear some of your favorite traditions and dishes for our listeners.

PADMA LAKSHMI: I mean, for me, we do one big Diwali party every year. We didn't do it last year, obviously, because of COVID. And I'm not sure that we will do it this year. But that is the one big blowout party that we have in my house. We have usually, you know, traditional vegetarian Indian food. We have classical musicians who live in the New York area come and perform. We have people singing Carnatic music, including my daughter — not me, but my daughter. And, you know, we all dress up in saris or lehengas and we, you know, have flowers and we have a little religious ceremony that's very small and done in five minutes. And then we just sit around and eat and chat and dance and sing. But beyond that, for Thanksgiving and Christmas, I do make a big turkey. And I think I enjoy making that turkey almost more for the turkey pot pie that will happen the next day.

SABRINA: Oh, wow.

PADMA: And so — yeah. So it's almost like I'm making the turkey because that's what we make on Thanksgiving. But really I'm just making it with an eye towards making that pot pie the next day. And usually for Thanksgiving the turkey stays the same, but — and even our sides stay the same but they all change ethnicity. And what I mean by that is that we'll make mashed potatoes. But one year will add sriracha to the mashed potatoes. One year we will add harissa to the mashed potatoes or maybe bits of Moroccan preserved lemon. Another time maybe we'll add some chipotle in adobo that's been pureed into the mashed potatoes. So every year we pick a country and the sides all lean in spices and flavorings to word that, that country's flavors. So we're still making roast vegetables. We're still making something with cranberry, but it's either a cranberry chutney or something else.

SABRINA: I love that. That's so fun.

PADMA: Thank you.

SABRINA: And who gets to decide what country you want to be traveling to, so to speak?

PADMA: I mean, me. I usually try and ask. I always — I always ask my family a couple of weeks out, like, do you guys have any requests? You know, what are you in the mood for? And if anyone has any ideas, I always welcome them because, you know, it gets tiring making up everything by yourself. But — and I have help in the kitchen, obviously, on the day. But, you know, mostly like one year we even did ramen for Christmas. You know, because everyone was just like, let's do ramen. We had all these beautiful ramen noodles from Sun Noodle because I had visited their factory in Hawaii and I, you know, came back with all this fresh ramen and they're like, yeah, let's do that. And we just — we had all these, like, oven roasted maitake mushrooms that we got crispy and flaked into the ramen on top and it was fun.

SABRINA: So is there like an open door policy for this holiday season where I could just maybe pop on by?

PADMA: Yes, of course.

SABRINA: I'll bring a dish.

PADMA: Yes. Yes.

SABRINA: To wrap up today's episode, we'll rewind again to Martie Duncan getting some useful advice from *Masterchef* Season 10 winner Dorian Hunter. They'll be talking about baking, as well as when **NOT** to try out that crazy new recipe you just discovered.

MARTIE DUNCAN: What tips would you give our listeners for baking? That is one of the biggest questions I get that people have terrible baking fails and they're not sure what they've done wrong. You have any of your tried-and-true tips for baking in general?

DORIAN HUNTER: Yes, know how to read a recipe. When you're able to read a recipe from top to bottom, you'll be able to point out mistakes, learn the sequence of formulas, because we know baking is a science. You can't just throw everything in a bowl all at one time and think it's going to come out right and be patient. That's the one thing about baking that really I still struggle with because I want to peek, I want it to be done right now. And you have to be patient when it comes to baking. It's a science. It takes time. You know, I always say, a success is anything you can eat.

MARTIE: That's right. Even if it comes out...

DORIAN: It may not look like you want it to look, but if you can eat it, that's a success.

MARTIE: Unless you present it to Chef Ramsay, it probably is. You know? Cause most people at their house, they don't care. The kids, especially, don't care. You know?

DORIAN: Right. And he may even say, 'You know what? It looks like crap, but it tastes really good.' So, I mean, it's still a success.

MARTIE: That's right. A lot of times I have tried new things and done something a little bit off — you know, different. And then it doesn't look very good. It tastes good. So I just make it look pretty by — oh, I don't know, making like a little trifle out of it or parfait or something, where it doesn't truly matter as much what it looks like, more or what it tastes like. Right?

DORIAN: Exactly. I always tell people when they take my baking classes, I always say, 'look, at the end of this, I know that everybody here is not a professional. Some of you have never baked a cake. But the object is for you to be able to eat whatever it is you make. And if you can eat it, it's OK if it doesn't look like mine or it doesn't quite, you know, fit that picture perfect idea. But it's yours. You did it and you can be proud of it.'

Do not wait until Thanksgiving, Christmas, those special holidays to try something new, do it several times. So then by the time you get to that holiday, you have it perfected.

MARTIE: That's right.

DORIAN: But don't let your first time be on a major holiday.

MARTIE: No. Or when you're having guests over, you know?

DORIAN: Exactly.

MARTIE: And you want it to be so good. And I've had a lot of people email me and say, I tried your X, Y, Z recipe and it didn't work. I'm like, well, what did you do? Well I didn't use what you said. I used milk. I'm like, OK.

DORIAN: Yeah.

MARTIE: You know? So don't make substitutions to a recipe that's been tested.

DORIAN: Right.

MARTIE: And don't, don't try it for Thanksgiving or Christmas for the first time.

DORIAN: Exactly.

MARTIE: Great advice.

SABRINA: Thanks so much everyone for listening to this week's episode of Homemade. We really hope that your holiday season is smooth and delicious. Next week be sure to tune in because we are hearing from an absolute legend in the food industry. He owns nearly three dozen restaurants, just launched a new media company, and happens to run one of the largest food-related charities in the world. Oh, and did I mention he's also one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people and he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. That's right, I'm talking about Chef Jose Andres.

JOSE ANDRES: In World Central Kitchen, we try to make sure one thing: That every problem that we face is connected to many others. And that you cannot just handle one problem alone without understanding all the connections with everything else around. Because when you do it this way, you will be in better shape to handle that problem by, at the same time, helping other problems that surround that one.

SABRINA: You won't wanna miss it so be sure to follow Homemade on your favorite podcast app. We're always looking for feedback on the show so if you love us and have a second, please rate us on Apple Podcasts and leave us a review.

Don't forget, you can find thousands of recipes, meal ideas, and cooking how-to's from the world's largest community of cooks at Allrecipes.com. And you can find me on [Instagram](#) at @SabrinaMedora or at sabrinedora.com.

This podcast was produced by Allrecipes with Digital Content Director Jason Burnett. A huge thank you to our production team of Rachael King, Matt Sav, Danielle Roth, Jim Hanke, Maya Kroth, and Andy Bosnak at Pod People.

This is Homemade, I'm Sabrina Medora and remember: Cook with love, eat with joy.