

Two types of pasta,  
with cranberries and  
Italian soy sausage

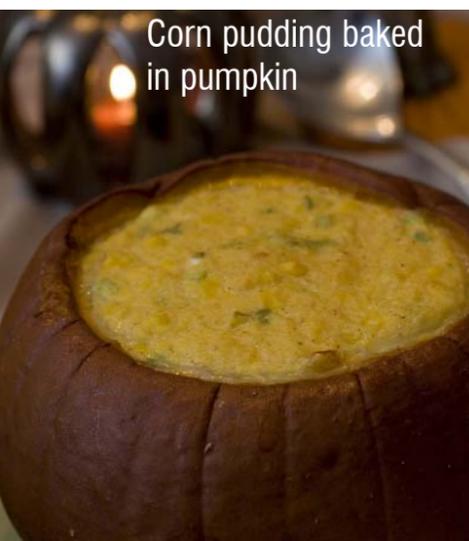
# A Vegetarian Thanksgiving

By JANE VARNER MALHOTRA

While most Americans relish roasted turkey or other meats for the annual Thanksgiving Day feast, the estimated 2.8 percent of Americans who are vegetarian can enjoy the holiday meal, too.

Stepping outside on a brisk, late-November morning, the sounds and smells of autumn fill the air. Brown and auburn leaves float softly toward the cool, damp earth. Squirrels scamper about gathering the last of the acorns. The aroma of baking breads and roasting veggies seep outside from kitchens already busy on this Thanksgiving Day.

In the tradition of the Native American Indians and the European settlers sharing a harvest meal together, on the fourth Thursday of November Americans celebrate Thanksgiving. Friends and family gather to give thanks for all the blessings of the year, crowding around a candlelit table to share in the fall feast. The centerpiece of the traditional table? A large, stuffed and golden-roasted turkey. But the holiday known informally as Turkey Day requires a little adjusting for vegetarians. There are about 5.7 million of them in the United States, according to a 2003 Harris Interactive poll done for The Vegetarian Research Group.



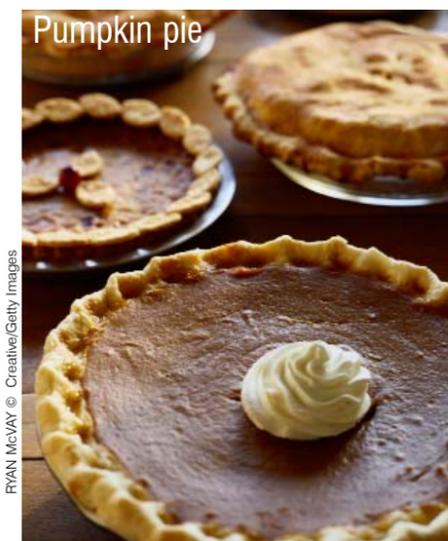
Corn pudding baked  
in pumpkin



Braised green beans  
with tomatoes



Sweet potato and  
apple gratin



Pumpkin pie

Photographs by LARRY CROWE © AP/WIDEWORLD

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JANE VARNER MALHOTRA

Fiona Martone, 7, helps her mother, Camille, prepare the Thanksgiving feast.

the table. In general, my sister and I both just prefer to eat all the side veggies at Thanksgiving," she explains.

Once they had Thanksgiving dinner with another family who insisted on bringing a Tofurky, a "turkey alternative" made from tofu. "Some like it. But I think that there is actually a sizable subset of vegetarians who aren't crazy about fake meat—just because we don't eat meat doesn't mean we miss it.

"There's so much vegetarian food in the traditional meal that we really have never missed the turkey, and most attempts to create a special main dish have kind of flopped or just gone ignored, because it's still a time when we like to enjoy all the traditional favorites. It's nice to have a dish of vegetarian gravy. I love vegetarian stuffing and my mom is always experimenting with that. I appreciate the effort she makes to have a few of the childhood comfort foods veggie friendly," she says.

### Jennifer Scott's Roasted Winter Vegetables

#### Ingredients:

- 4 to 6 medium potatoes, cubed
- 1 bulb fennel, diced
- 2 onions, diced
- 3 carrots
- 3 medium beets, scrubbed but not peeled
- 4 cloves of garlic, coarsely chopped
- Olive oil
- Rosemary

#### Method:

Preheat oven to 450 F. Bring six cups of water to boil. Add chopped potatoes, beets and carrots. Simmer for five minutes and drain (reserving the stock for stuffing or soup). Toss all the vegetables with 1/4 cup olive oil. Spread out evenly on a baking sheet, sprinkle with salt and pepper and a pinch of rosemary. Roast for about 20 minutes on the top rack of the oven, stirring to prevent sticking, until the veggies are golden and brown. Transfer to a bowl. Serves eight.

### Roasted vegetables



JANE VARNER MALHOTRA



Photographs courtesy Jennifer Scott

In Saratoga, California, the Smith-Jain family enjoys a traditional American Thanksgiving feast without the meat, and with a few dishes tweaked for their Indian American tastes.

"Cranberry chutney. Spiced, roasted winter squash. Greens and green beans—fall foods," recites Ann Smith, whose two daughters and husband all help with the holiday cooking. Her husband, Peeyush Jain, grew up in Iowa, where his mother learned to adapt Indian dishes to American holidays. "Peeyush's mom devised a dal and broccoli dish that really goes well with Thanksgiving."

Often considered the start of the winter holiday season, the Friday after Thanksgiving is a big shopping day. December schedules become hectic as people scurry around, checking off lists and running to the post office, holiday parties, stores and Christmas celebrations.

But on Thanksgiving Day itself, shops

are closed for the national holiday, parks swell with young and old bundled in scarves and out for a stroll, and churches and shelters are overwhelmed with food donations for the hungry.

"I love Thanksgiving because it's non-commercial. Any day that is about reflecting on our blessings in life is something to feel good about," says Smith. "I love the whole premise of getting together with friends, family, and friends that don't have family to get together with, to share in good food, conversation.

"Our daughters' first grade teacher always had the kids read a traditional native blessing before their sharing feast," Smith recalls. "Thanksgiving is a great time to reflect on the gifts we receive from the earth and all its creatures—just as the native people would have done at that first Thanksgiving, and every waking day."

After the first Thanksgiving Day celebrated by the Pilgrims and the American Indians in 1621, an autumn day of thanksgiving was commemorated in towns, counties and by the various American colonies for 150 years. The declaration of November 26, 1789 as a day of "thanksgiving and prayer...to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God" was the first proclamation by President George Washington. President Abraham Lincoln made it an annual national holiday in 1863.

#### For more information:

A Recipe For a Family Fight

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/169906>

Left: Lennon Nesich, 4, helps his mother, Jennifer Scott, with preparations. Below: Lennon, as a baby, with his father, Steve Nesich, on an earlier Thanksgiving Day.



### Ann Smith's Spiced, Roasted Winter Squash

#### Ingredients:

- 2 acorn squash (or other favorite winter squash)
- Olive oil
- Garam masala
- Cayenne pepper (optional)
- Salt
- Brown sugar or maple syrup
- Melted butter

#### Method:

Halve the squash, then clean out seeds, but leave the skin on. Halve again, then cut into thin wedges about one inch thick. These will look like crescent moon shapes. Toss in a bowl with a light coating of olive oil, then transfer to a baking sheet.

Roast in 400 degree F oven until golden and tender when poked with a fork. Turn once during roasting. Sprinkle lightly with brown sugar or syrup, garam masala, salt and pinch of cayenne if desired. Top with a little melted butter poured over each slice. Return to oven just long enough for sugar to caramelize a bit. Be sure to scrape up some of the sugary remnants off the pan when serving.



JANE VARNER MALHOTRA

### Squash

Jane Varner Malhotra writes from Washington, D.C., where she and her Indian American husband have lived off and on for two decades.

So much of Thanksgiving is turkey, turkey, turkey. But really it's all about the warmth—food, family, friends sharing a meal together," explains a vegetarian mother of four, Camille Martone, who lives in Washington, D.C. "The kids like a large gathering and often we share Thanksgiving with non-vegetarians. We don't do turkey but sometimes there may be a roasted chicken or two on the table for the meat-eaters. But we make our meal from all the trimmings that go with the typical turkey dinner: mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, vegetarian gravy and stuffing, squash, Brussels sprouts."

Each child has a favorite and helps prepare the item. "That's always been our tradition," says Martone. "Traditions are an important part of Thanksgiving." The youngest, Fiona, who is 7, likes to help make the stuffing. "We obviously don't cook it in the bird (as most Thanksgiving cooks do) just bake it in a pan, and we use a simple vegetable stock we make from cooked carrots, potatoes and celery."

Asked if she adds sage, the main ingredient in "poultry seasoning" mixes that many Americans use to dress their turkeys, Martone says, "Well, it's an herb that I associate too closely with turkey meat, so I have a distaste for it."

Dessert? "Definitely homemade apple pie." Last year the Martones' cousins brought a pumpkin cheesecake, too. "It was delicious. And you know, pumpkins and other winter squash are in season, and we try to eat seasonally," she says.

### Camille Martone's Traditional American Stuffing

- Dice stale bread
- Add fresh herbs: celery, parsley, basil and oregano
- Sauté onions (not brown) in olive oil
- Add mushrooms (optional)
- Add vegetable broth, bring to boil
- Add chopped walnuts or cranberries (optional)
- Let cool and add to bread crumbs
- Bake at 350 degrees F for about 30 minutes



LARRY GROVE © AP/WIDE

Jennifer Scott of Seattle, in Washington state, has been enjoying a vegetarian Thanksgiving celebration for over 20 years. Both she and her sister chose to forgo meat at an early age, despite their parents' non-veg lifestyle. Scott's husband, Steve Nesich, and their young son, Lennon, enjoy helping with preparations for the big meal they usually share with her parents, sister and brother-in-law.

"I've learned that Thanksgiving Day itself is not the best day to experiment with a new alternative to traditional favorites. It may not even be necessary for the one or two veggie guests who are at