

THE BOOZE CLUES / A FREE PARTY GUIDE

Pass the Gravy. Not the Judgment.

THE THANKSGIVING PARTY GUIDE

Three cocktails, familiar foods, and one punch for the extended family group chat.

Bring something delicious to the table. The unsolicited opinions will arrive on their own.

The menu has a plan. The relatives may not.

A few good recipes and familiar Thanksgiving pairings. Choose the drinks that suit your gathering; this is a menu of options, not a four-drink itinerary.

01

WELCOME

So, Are You Seeing Anyone?

Pear, ginger, vodka, and lemon. Baked Brie or a cheddar-and-cracker board.

02

THE MAIN EVENT

The Unsolicited Opinion

A cranberry and sage margarita. Roast turkey, herb stuffing, and green beans.

03

PIE TIME

The Favorite Child

A chilled coffee and aged rum cocktail. Pumpkin pie or pecan pie.

04

FOR THE TABLE

The Extended Family Group Chat

An apple, cranberry, and bourbon punch. Turkey or glazed ham with the Thanksgiving sides.

HOSTING, WITHOUT A COMMITTEE

The day before: chill the mixers, make a large ice block, and set out glasses. The punch base can be made ahead; its bubbles cannot.

Before guests arrive: prep the garnishes and set out water and options without alcohol. Keep a measured pour at the punch bowl.

Conversation tip: "Who wants pie?" remains a remarkably versatile sentence.

So, Are You Seeing Anyone?

A pear cocktail. Yes, a pear. The irony will not be explained to your aunt.

1 COCKTAIL / ABOUT 3 MINUTES / 12 OZ HIGHBALL

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 oz vodka

2 oz pear nectar, chilled

1/2 oz fresh lemon juice

2 oz nonalcoholic ginger beer, chilled

Ice; 1 thin pear slice, to garnish

MAKE IT

01 Fill a highball glass with fresh ice. Add vodka, pear nectar, and lemon juice. Stir to combine.

02 Top with ginger beer and give it one gentle stir. Garnish with a thin pear slice.

Ingredient clue: choose pear nectar, not pear syrup. Shake the closed nectar container before measuring.

PUT IT NEXT TO

Baked Brie, or sharp cheddar with crackers.

Juicy pear complements the cheese; lemon and ginger bring a bright, lively contrast to its richness.

Table manners: relationship updates are optional. Passing the cheese is not.

The Unsolicited Opinion

Bright cranberry, earthy sage, and a lime finish. Refreshingly concise. An example for the table.

1 COCKTAIL / ABOUT 5 MINUTES / 10 OZ ROCKS GLASS

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 oz reposado tequila

1 oz cranberry juice cocktail

3/4 oz fresh lime juice

1/4 oz agave syrup

2 fresh sage leaves

Ice; 1 lime wheel, to garnish

Optional: a small pinch of kosher salt for half the rim; an extra sage leaf to garnish

MAKE IT

01 If using salt, moisten half the rim with lime and dip lightly in salt.

02 In a shaker, press the sage gently into the agave twice with a spoon. Add tequila, cranberry, lime, and ice. Shake for 10 seconds.

03 Fine strain into the glass over fresh ice. Add the lime wheel and, if you like, a fresh sage leaf.

PUT IT NEXT TO

Roast turkey, herb stuffing, and buttery green beans.

Sage echoes the stuffing, while cranberry and lime bring brightness alongside turkey and gravy. Use sweetened cranberry juice cocktail, not unsweetened pure cranberry juice.

Suggested response to most opinions: "Interesting. Could you pass the stuffing?"

The Favorite Child

Coffee, aged rum, and an orange finish. Pairs with pie and apparently your cousin's recent promotion.

1 COCKTAIL / ABOUT 5 MINUTES, PLUS COFFEE COOLING / COUPE

INGREDIENTS

1 1/2 oz aged rum

1 oz espresso or strong black coffee, cooled completely

1/2 oz coffee liqueur

2 dashes orange bitters

Ice; 1 strip orange peel, to garnish

MAKE IT

01 Brew the coffee and let it cool completely before mixing. Chill a coupe glass.

02 Shake rum, coffee, coffee liqueur, and orange bitters with ice for 10 to 15 seconds.

03 Strain into the chilled coupe. Twist the orange peel over the surface to release its oils, then rest it on the rim.

Ingredient clue: use plain aged rum rather than a sweetened spiced rum. The coffee should be unsweetened; the liqueur supplies the sweetness.

PUT IT NEXT TO

Pumpkin pie or pecan pie.

Coffee adds a gently bitter counterpoint to sweet pie, while rum and orange complement toasted nuts, caramel, and warm baking spices.

There is enough pie for everyone. This is not a performance review.

The Extended Family Group Chat

The one contribution to the family group chat that everyone actually asked for.

16 SERVINGS OF 6 OZ / 12 CUPS TOTAL BEFORE ICE / SERVE COLD

About 10 minutes to mix, plus at least 2 hours to chill. Use a punch bowl of at least 5 quarts, or divide between pitchers with room for ice and fruit.

INGREDIENTS

- **2 cups** bourbon
- **4 cups** nonalcoholic apple cider
- **2 cups** cranberry juice cocktail
- **1/2 cup** fresh lemon juice
- **1/4 cup** pure maple syrup
- **1 1/4 cups** cold water
- **2 cups** nonalcoholic ginger beer, chilled
- A large ice block; optional thin apple and orange slices

MAKE IT

01 Up to 24 hours ahead, mix everything except the ginger beer, ice, and fruit. Cover and refrigerate.

02 Just before serving, stir the chilled base and add the ginger beer. Add a large ice block and, if using, the fruit. Stir gently once.

03 Measure 6 oz per serving into small glasses. Keep the remaining punch chilled and add fresh ice to individual glasses if wanted.

PUT IT NEXT TO

The Thanksgiving buffet: turkey or glazed ham, stuffing, and roasted sweet potatoes.

Apple, cranberry, and maple fit the familiar flavors on the table. Lemon and ginger keep the punch lively alongside rich, savory food.

Host's note: label this as bourbon punch. Keep water and something without alcohol nearby. The serving measure is 6 oz; Aunt Linda's "small splash" is not a unit.

Shop with a plan. Improvise the seating.

Two separate shopping blocks, so you can choose individual cocktails, punch, or both. These are recipe yields, not a per-person serving plan.

THE THREE INDIVIDUAL COCKTAILS

Makes 4 of each / 12 drinks total

6 fl oz each vodka, reposado tequila, aged rum

2 fl oz coffee liqueur

8 fl oz pear nectar

8 fl oz nonalcoholic ginger beer

4 fl oz cranberry juice cocktail

2 fl oz fresh lemon juice

3 fl oz fresh lime juice

1 fl oz agave syrup

4 fl oz cooled espresso or strong coffee

8 dashes orange bitters

8 leaves fresh sage; 4 extra if garnishing

THE PUNCH

One batch / 16 drinks of 6 fl oz

16 fl oz bourbon

32 fl oz nonalcoholic apple cider

16 fl oz cranberry juice cocktail

4 fl oz fresh lemon juice

2 fl oz pure maple syrup

16 fl oz nonalcoholic ginger beer

10 fl oz cold water

One large ice block

Optional: 1 apple and 1 orange for slices

FRESH FINISHES & A LITTLE EQUIPMENT

For the individual drinks: 1 pear for four thin slices; 1 lime for four wheels; 1 orange for four peel strips. For juice, allow about 3 to 4 lemons and 4 limes if making both shopping blocks; fruit yields vary. Reserve garnish fruit separately. Have fresh ice for mixing and serving.

Useful tools: jigger or small measure, shaker, fine strainer, citrus juicer, spoon, highballs, rocks glasses, coupes, and a punch bowl or pitchers. US liquid measures are used throughout: 1 cup = 8 fl oz.

Final hosting rule: accept help, offer water, and put the leftovers in containers before anyone proposes a second family photo.