Thanksgiving Sidekicks

"Preparing a holiday meal can be frustrating and intimidating due to the variations in recipes as well as high family expectations. The meal usually contains a wide variety of ingredients and many different cooking methods. Recipes will certainly help you gain new ideas, but there is no substitute for basic cooking methods, using all your senses to cook more than the written recipe." -Chef Todd Mohr

Effects of Cooking on Vegetables:

Controlling texture changes

Fiber
- Cellulose and pectin gives shape and firmness
- Amount of fiber varies
- Spinach and tomato have less than carrot/turnip
- Old, tough carrots have more than young, fresh
- Tender tips of asparagus have less than tough stalks
- Is made firmer by
  - Acids: extends cooking time
  - Sugars: strengthens cell structure
    - For firm poached pears, use sugar syrup
    - For apple sauce, cook to soft, then add sugar
- Is made softer by
  - Heat: Longer cooking = softer vegetables
  - Alkalis: destroy vitamins, makes mushy

Controlling color changes
- Pigments give vegetables their color.
- Different pigments react differently to heat and acids

White vegetables
- Flavones are white pigments in onions, cauliflower,
- Stay white in acid, turn yellow in alkaline
- Too much acid will toughen the vegetable

Red vegetables
- Anthocyanins are red pigments in beets, cabbage
- Acids turn them brighter red
- Alkalis turn them blue or blue green
- Red pigments dissolve easily in water

Green vegetables
- Chlorophyll is green coloring in all green plants
- Acid and long cooking turn to drab olive color
- Protect the color of green vegetables by:
- Cooking uncovered to allow plant acids to escape
- Cooking for shortest possible time
- Steam cooks rapidly, lessens loss of flavor, nutrients

Yellow and Orange vegetables
- Carotenoids – yellow and orange pigments in corn, carrots, tomatoes, red peppers, sweet potatoes
- These pigments are very stable
- Little effected by acids or alkalis
- Short cooking keeps color and nutrients

Types of Potatoes

Waxy or New potatoes
- High moisture content, high sugar content, low starch content
- Usually small and round in shape with thinner skin
- Flesh is white, yellow, blue or purple
- Skin is white, red, yellow or blue
- Holds shape well when cooked
- Used for boiling whole, salads, soups, hash browns
- Any preparation where potato must hold its shape
- Do not use for deep frying
  - High sugar content causes dark streaks, poor texture

Mealy or starchy potatoes
- High starch, low moisture and sugar
- Light, dry, and mealy when cooked
- Russet or Idaho
- Long, regularly shaped with rough skin
- Ideal for baking and french fries
- High starch content produces even, gold color

All purpose (chef potatoes)
- Not as dry or starchy as russets
- Suitable for most purposes
- Excellent for mashing or pureeing

Cranberries

Cranberries grow wild in northern Europe and the northern climates of the United States

Harvested between Labor Day and Halloween

Any cranberries that are discolored or shriveled should be discarded.

Cranberries can be refrigerated, tightly wrapped for at least 2 months, or frozen for up to a year.

Due to tartness, cranberries are most often combined with other fruit.

Cranberries are very high in vitamin C

Checking for Quality Potatoes

Firm and smooth, not soft or shriveled

Dry skins

Shallow eyes

No sprouts (sprouting potatoes are high in sugar)

No green color (green color shows Solanine, they've been stored in light)

Solanine – has bitter taste and is poisonous in large quantities.

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