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**11/24/05**

### Thanksgiving, on or off the couch

Have that perfect, just-like-TV Thanksgiving dinner in mind? The turkey cooked just right, stuffing steaming, the pumpkin pie's aroma filling the air?

Just one problem with this picture-perfect meal: You -- and all of your guests -- can't cook. Or, only when

you turn on the parade do you realize it's Thanksgiving morning, and the shopping still needs to be done.

There are ways to solve the turkey mishaps and mashed potato bumps. If a problem-free meal out sounds tasty to you, there are restaurants open to help say thanks. And collecting the components for a delicious home-cooked meal is also feasible today, with stores open to assist.

### Home cookin'

If that home-cooked meal with family recipes is what you're after, don't fret -- many stores will be open.

All Wal-Mart Supercenters will be open 24 hours, although non-Supercenters -- such as the one in Punta Gorda -- will be closed.

Additionally, all Kmart stores will be open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. All Winn-Dixie stores will be open 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for any last-minute turkey needs.

Also, some pharmacy and convenience stores will be open.

CVS stores will be open 24 hours. However, the CVS in North Port, 14988 Tamiami Trail -- which is usually open 24 hours -- will open at 6 a.m. today.

Non-24-hour CVS stores, such as the Englewood store, 1760 S. McCall Road, will be open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., but their pharmacies will close at 2 p.m.

The 24-hour Walgreens, like the Port Charlotte store at 22449 Edgewater Drive, will be open all day. The pharmacies will also be open.

The non-24-hour Walgreens stores will be open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Though these Walgreens stores will not have open pharmacies, the attached liquor stores, such as the store on 1930 Kings Highway, Port Charlotte, will be open.

Now that you have all of the ingredients, what next? The turkey in the cookbook definitely isn't

light pink and cold.

There are numerous Web sites to guide you for any cooking questions.

A simple and helpful site, complete with cooking times, stuffing help, "how to" videos and some recipes is the Butterball Web site, [www.butterball.com](http://www.butterball.com). The Butterball hot line also allows you to talk with a live human being during your trials in the kitchen. Call 1-800-BUTTERBALL.

### **Turkey without the cleanup**

If you would rather focus on other things than preparing a holiday feast, numerous restaurants will be open today.

But before you leave for your favorite restaurant, you might want to give it a call. Some places, like Bob Evans, the Port Charlotte Applebee's, Red Lobster, Outback Steakhouse, Carrabba's, Cap'n and the Cowboy, Olive Garden and Donato's will be closed today, and others may have a long wait.

River City Grill in Punta Gorda will be open noon to 8 p.m., and a reservation is strongly suggested, though not mandatory. Waiting might be a key ingredient, because from about 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., they are pretty booked, employees say. The restaurant will have its full menu available, along with Thanksgiving specials. Call (941) 639-9080 for more information or to make a reservation.

TGI Friday's in Port Charlotte will be open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Most Denny's and all IHOP restaurants will also be open all day.

For a southern "home-cooked" meal, all Cracker Barrels will be open regular hours, and starting at 11 a.m., a special turkey dinner will be served.

Perkins will also be open 6 a.m. to midnight.

For something a little different than what the Pilgrims ate, the Panda Inn restaurant and International Super Buffet, both in Port Charlotte, will be open.

Mel's Diner in Port Charlotte will be open 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., with four special holiday dinners to choose from.

The Captain's Table in Fishermen's Village will have a buffet from noon to 6 p.m., but seating will only be available on the deck on a first-come, first-served basis. Harpoon Harry's will also be open 11 a.m. to midnight.

In North Port, the Olde World Restaurant will be open 11 a.m. on. While it is only taking reservations, which seem to all be booked, you might still want to call in case of cancellations.

The Lock N' Key Restaurant and Pub in Englewood will be open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., with priority seating reservations accepted.

Howard's Restaurant in Englewood will also be serving a special Thanksgiving dinner from 11 a.m. to around 8 p.m.

### **Post-turkey entertainment**

Still have the energy to move after eating your Thanksgiving dinner?

Movie theaters, including Regal Cinemas Town Center 16, 1441 Tamiami Trail, Murdock; Merchants Crossing in North Fort Myers and the Hollywood 20 at 1993 Main St., Sarasota, will be open.

Also, if your family feels more like mini-golfing, the Fish Cove Adventure Golf in Charlotte Harbor, 4949 Tamiami Trail, will be open 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Some bowling alleys will also be open today. Treasure Lanes, 1059 Tamiami Trail, Port Charlotte, will be open noon to midnight. Bowland Port Charlotte, 3192 Harbor Blvd., will also be open 5 p.m. to 11 p.m.

## **WHAT'S ON TV**

\* 9 a.m., NBC, CBS, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

\* noon, NBC, National Dog Show

\* 1:30 p.m., CBS, "The Man Who Saved Christmas"

\* 2 p.m., NBC, "Miracle on 34th Street"

\* 8 p.m., ABC, "A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving"

\* 8:30 p.m., ABC, "Finding Nemo"

## **COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING DINNERS**

\* noon-3 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Punta Gorda, 507 W. Marion Ave. Free. (941) 639-3842.

\* 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at Gulf Cove United Methodist Church, 1100 McCall Road (State Road 776), Gulf Cove. Free. (941) 697-1747.

\* noon at the Bread of Life Mission, 6454 Scott St., Punta Gorda; and 2 p.m. at the Arcadia Spanish Church of God, 1075 S.E. Granada Drive. Free. (941) 575-4440.

\* noon-1:30 p.m. at the Charlotte County Homeless Coalition Genesis Center, 1476 Kenesaw St., Murdock. Free. (941) 627-4313.

\* 2:30 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church, 4285 Wesley Lane, North Port. Free; reservations required. Call (941) 426-1734.

\* noon-2 p.m. at Indian Mound Park, 210 Winson Ave., Englewood. Prepared by Englewood Foursquare Church and community members. Free. (941) 475-7161.


\* 1-4 p.m. at American Legion Post 113, 3436 Indiana Road, Rotonda West. Cost, \$11; gratuity not included. Open to the public. (941) 697-3616.

\* 2 p.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church, 304 W. Oak St., Arcadia. Free. (863) 494-2543.

*You can e-mail Teddi Thosath at [tthosath@sun-herald.com](mailto:tthosath@sun-herald.com).*

**By TEDDI THOSATH**

## Sun Intern

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