

Survive the holiday cooking rush by keeping it simple

Thanksgiving! I love Thanksgiving. One gets to enjoy all the same foods and company as at Christmas without the full stress load of gift-giving.

I've had at least 10 people ask me what do I serve for Thanksgiving, and have I got any really good ideas for what vegetables to make. It seems that the entrée and potatoes are simple for most of you— but you're stuck on the veggies.

Well, this year I am going to try a new recipe for little pearl onions, roasted with a cranberry/port glaze. I will also serve roasted root vegetables.

This is really easy. Use any root vegetable combination you like: turnips, sweet potatoes, parsnips, carrots, onions, beets and cut them into equal sized large chunks. Mix them in a bowl with olive oil, salt, pepper and rosemary. Spread them on a baking sheet and bake at 350F for about a half hour. Then turn them with a lifter and bake for another approximately 15 minutes to half hour. Pour into your serving dish, cover with foil and keep on low in the oven until you are ready to serve them.

I always find that a vegetable casserole is a great idea for these busy meals where you are feeding large crowds of people. I'm sure you'd much rather be socializing than standing in the kitchen cooking three different vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy. Things like broccoli casserole, squash casserole, anything that you can make in advance and then bake in

What's cookin'

Lori and Gerry Kentner



the oven works really well.

Another hint is this. To save yourself the trouble of making gravy at the last minute, roast up a couple of inexpensive little chickens a couple of days

before the meal. Use the gel from these birds to make your gravy. Take the meat off the bones and freeze it and boil the bones down. Refrigerate the bones and water. The next day remove the fat from the top and then use the liquid in the gravy instead of water. This will make a wonderful gravy, you won't have to make it at the last minute and now you have some chicken in the freezer for a chicken salad or soup or sandwiches later on.

If you are really too busy for mashed potatoes, since they require

last minute preparation, try roasted potatoes (on a baking sheet with butter, salt, pepper, paprika and chopped parsley) or a potato casserole.

My favourite trick to making these big family meals easier is to rent the dishes. I am in the business, so I go all out and rent the dishes, flatware, glassware and linens. But even renting the glassware and napkins can make your life so much easier. Make a conscious effort to make your meal easier this year so you can enjoy the festivities as much as anyone else.

Have fun and keep cooking!

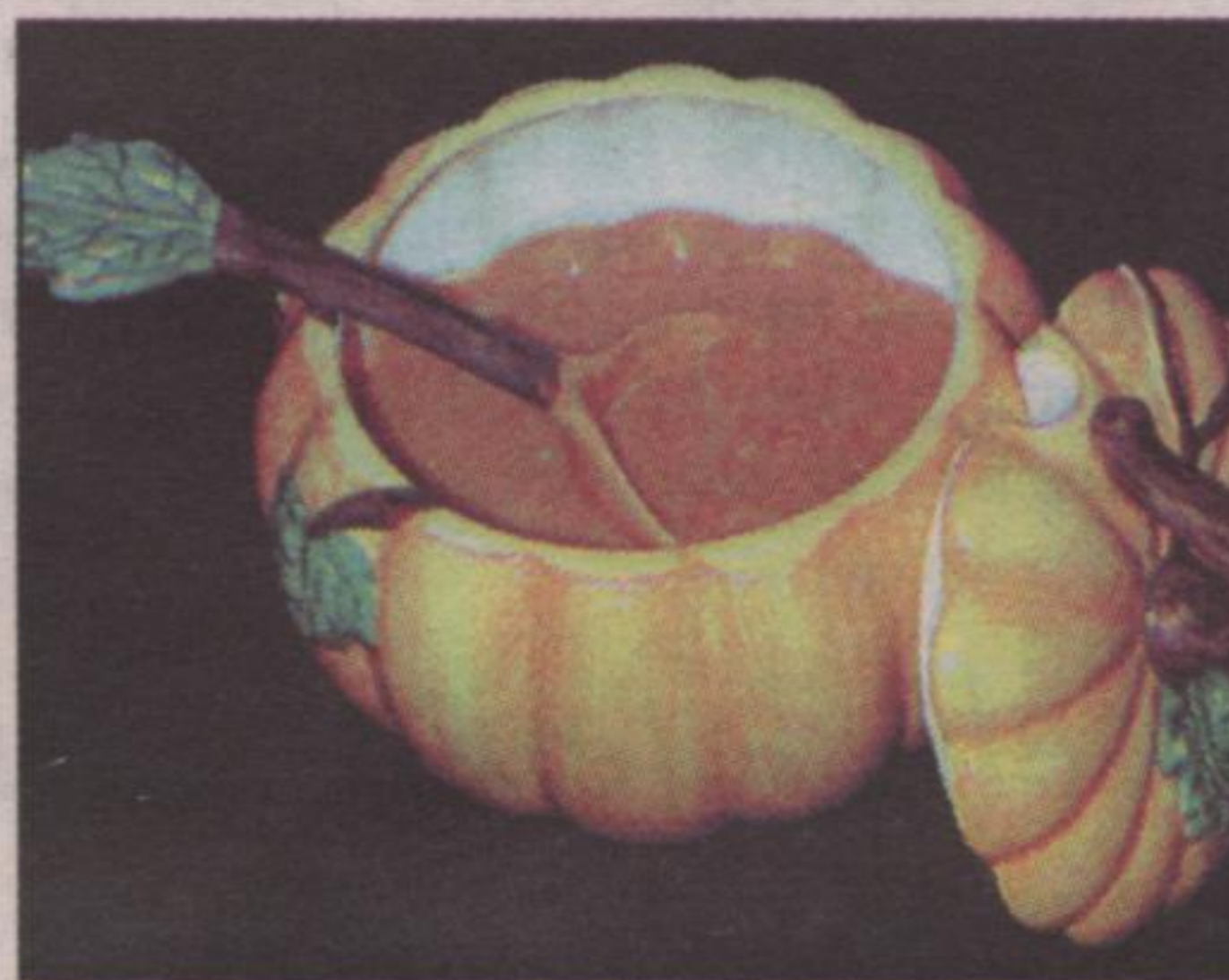
This week's recipe: Roasted Sweet Potato Soup

Ingredients

- 4 sweet potatoes (about 3 lbs total)
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 leeks, thinly sliced
- 1 carrot, thinly sliced
- 5 cups chicken stock
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 cup (approx.) light cream or milk

Garnish

- 1 cup light sour cream
- 1/2 tsp ground cardamom
- fresh chives, minced



Method

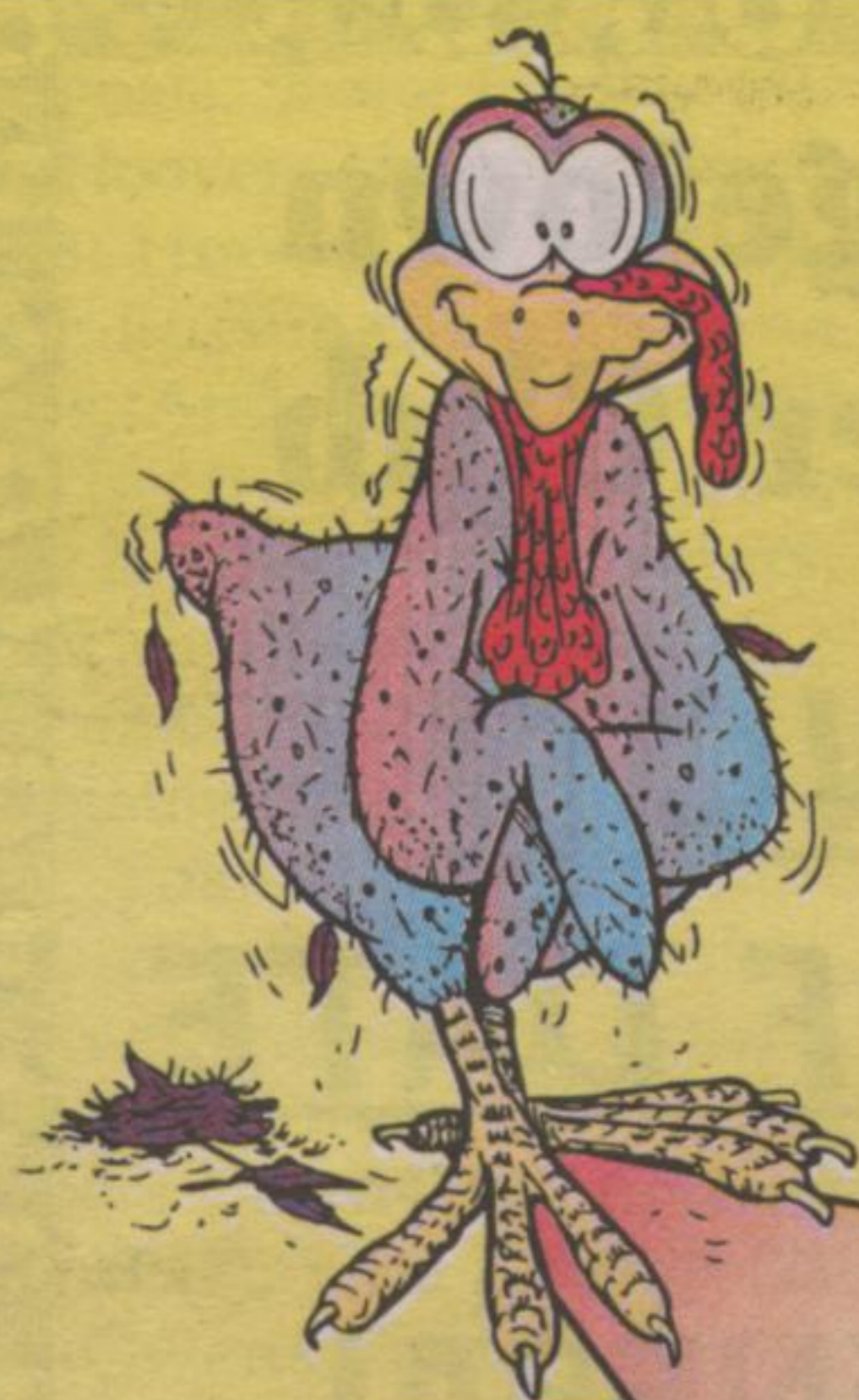
1. Pierce potatoes with a fork in several places then place on a baking sheet and roast in 400 F oven for about 50 minutes or until soft. Peel and cut into large chunks once cooked.

2. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan over low heat, melt butter. Add leeks and carrots, stirring occasionally, for about 40 minutes or until softened and lightly browned. Stir in stock, sweet potatoes, ginger, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer over medium heat for 20 minutes.

3. Transfer to blender or food processor and purée until smooth.

4. Return to saucepan and stir in cream or milk, adding more if the soup is too thick. Gently heat, but do not boil. Taste and adjust the seasoning if necessary.

5. To garnish, stir together sour cream and cardamom. Garnish each serving with a swirl of the cardamom cream and a sprinkling of chives.



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