

Imagine having a homegrown Thanksgiving dinner featuring a table filled with fresh, local ingredients.

It may be easier than you think. And area farmers, ranchers and other Oklahoma

food-based businesses would be thankful for the support. "I think that all of the

things that are going to be on that basic menu can certainly be found

in Oklahoma," said Mike Spradling, president of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau. Spradling and his

wife, Lotsee Spradling, own and operate the Flying G Ranch near Sand Springs. Cattle

and pecans are their primary agricultural enterprises. He said that the ingredients for a

Thanksgiving dinner are readily available in the state. "We are fortunate to have lots

of nice fruits and vegetables in the state, and we also have good access

to them," Spradling said. Cooks can rely on the growing popularity of farmers markets

and food cooperatives to find the supplies for holiday dishes. Some area farmers markets

and ranches even sell direct to the consumer. Chef Sam Bracken of The Canebrake

resort in Wagoner uses many local resources in his menus. He said one reason

is because it is the right thing to do. "There is morality of it

for starters. By that I mean, why not support the people that are closest

to you? I'm just becoming less and less interested in having things shipped from

all over the world," Bracken said. Bracken said that he still orders some ingredients

from other regions. But with a little leg work, he has found that he

can find many things needed for the restaurant in Oklahoma. "We have so much

great produce and protein right here, and it makes sense economically, as well," Bracken

said. He said for home cooks it is even easier to find local products.

Many large grocery stores have aisles with signs advertising local products. Bracken also pointed

out that the cost of many foods is high right now, which is another

reason to support local farmers and ranchers. "If you can get a traditional Thanksgiving

meal put together with even 50 percent local ingredients, to me that is doing

pretty good," Bracken said. "It is worth the effort. It will probably taste better,

and it will make you feel better so, why not?" Turkey Finding an Oklahoma-raised turkey for Thanksgiving requires a bit of planning ahead. Arlus Walters of Walters Hatchery near Stilwell said that on Nov. 1, he makes his turkeys available on the Oklahoma Food Cooperative website. This year, all 150 of his Heritage turkeys were sold out within about three hours. "If people email me in October, I should be able to reserve one for them," Walters said. "Some people have called me after they are already sold. The only turkey that I have available is the one I kept for myself, and I am not selling it." Years ago, Walters sold his turkeys to Dean & DeLuca, a high-end New York-based grocer, and Martha Stewart featured his hatchery in her magazine. At that time, he raised about 750 to 1,000 birds for sale. Now, he is focusing his efforts on raising two species - one turkey a chocolate variety and the other a buff breed. Both were virtually extinct, he said. Walters said he plans to cook his turkey in his solar cooker using the sun for heat. He said cooking turkeys at a low temperature of about 225 degrees is the best way to keep from boiling the juice out of the birds. Walters doesn't bother with a brine, because a Heritage turkey has its own flavor. Another Oklahoma ranch we contacted started taking turkey orders at the beginning of the year and sold out in April. But there are still ways to buy a turkey and patronize local business, even though the bird might not have been raised here. Cusack Meats, a family-owned business that's been in operation since 1933, provides meats to Oklahomans and Oklahoma restaurants, said Lisa Lloyd, a spokeswoman representing Made in Oklahoma. Their most popular products around the holidays are their Honey-Glazed Spiral Ham and Hickory-Smoked Turkeys, and they sell about 10,000 or more around the holiday season. The products are available at their facility in Oklahoma City, online at tulsaworld.com/cusackmeats and at The Meat House in Edmond. Ralph's Packing Co. is also a family-owned, Oklahoma-based company that has been based in Perkins since 1959, Lloyd said.

They have a retail location in Perkins, but their products are available at select Walmart stores, Crest Foods and independent grocery stores. Ralph's most popular holiday item is smoked turkey, and they also offer an old fashioned bone-in, sugar-cured ham and boneless ham. They have won several state and national awards. They will sell a little over 20,000 pounds of smoked turkey, 12,000 pounds of bone-in ham, 15,000 pounds of boneless ham and 20,000 pounds of beef jerky this holiday season, Lloyd said. Vegetables

Most holiday tables feature a potato dish, including traditional mashed potatoes, scalloped potatoes and even the occasional Pommes Anna. And whether your family prefers green beans, Brussels sprouts or hearty greens, local farmers markets or co-ops are a good place to find fresh, locally grown vegetables for your holiday spread. Some popular Thanksgiving vegetables can be bought direct from farmers. Fisher's Produce in Bristow sells sweet potatoes - a holiday favorite - and other produce on the Oklahoma Food Cooperative. Luke Fisher said that his great-great grandfather moved to Oklahoma with his family in 1905 and settled several miles east of the newly established town of Bristow. Four generations later, his family is still farming the same land. Fisher said that this year was his first year to grow sweet potatoes successfully, but he plans to continue with the crop.

He said he has sold most of them through cooperatives but still has some of his crop left. "They are not hard to grow here, and they are pretty common in backyard gardens," Fisher said. "They survive the hot weather and low soil fertility." He said that he also grows regular potatoes, and they harvested those in June and sold them in the summer. "You could definitely make a large part of your diet from local vegetable and local meat products," Fisher said. Dressing

There are many ways to rely on local resources to make a stuffing that is sure to be a cut above the pre-packaged variety. Buying bread at a local bakery is one way. For example, Tulsa's Farrell Family Bread, 8034 S. Yale Ave., makes a loaf designed for dressing recipes, said Farrell chef Rick Miller. The

Tuscan loaf contains ingredients such as fresh sage, scallion and flat leaf parsley. "People buy it a day or two early so they have time to dry it out a bit," Miller said. Miller said that they make a cornbread that can be combined with the Tuscan loaf for a great dressing. But Farrell also buys local for some of its supplies. This year, Farrell is offering a new whole wheat loaf using wheat that is "grown and ground" in Fairview. "We add a little bit of honey, and the flour is super fresh. We get delivered to us every week," Miller said. The rolls at Farrell Family Bread are also very popular during Thanksgiving, Miller said. "We sell about 700 dozen rolls just the week of Thanksgiving alone," Miller said. Due to the popularity, Miller strongly encouraged anyone interested in the breads or rolls to call the bakery at 918-477-7077 ahead of time to order.

Dessert: Pecan pie Mike and Lotsee Spradling of the Flying G Ranch near Sand Springs started their pecan orchard with hopes that they would have enough pecans to have pies at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Now they have one of the most sophisticated pecan growing operations around. They have pecan trees on 800 acres near Catoosa and some at their ranch west of Sand Springs, where the pecans are shelled and sold at the Nut Shoppe. "We never intended to open a store. We were going to be a commercial grower. But people we knew found out we had these pecans and said they wanted to buy some," Lotsee Spradling said. They decided that they would need a cracker, so they bought an older machine in Kansas - just big enough to crack enough nuts for friends and family. "When word got out, our phone was ringing off the walls," Lotsee Spradling said. "I had to run that cracker around the clock. We have a lot of friends, and then their friends found out ..." Lotsee Spradling said the shop is open two months out of the year, during pecan season in November and December. The Flying G Ranch sells about six varieties of pecans. The Native variety is

extremely popular with cooks because they contain lots of oil, which means they have lots of flavor. Other varieties include Pawnee and Stuart. "People in Oklahoma just know they buy the pecans, and they can put them in the freezer and enjoy them all year until they come see us again the next year," she said.

Last year, the Spradlings harvested about half a million pounds of pecans, but this year won't be anywhere close to that amount. "The crop is pretty much devastated.

Pecans bear on alternating years, and we had such a huge crop last year.

Also, because of the drought, some of the trees became so stressed they could not hold on to their nuts," Lotsee Spradling said. Here are some recipes that

would work well with some of Oklahoma's local ingredients: FARRELL BREAD DRESSING 4 cups

stuffing bread 4 cups cornbread or whole wheat bread 3/4 cup each diced carrot

and yellow onion 1/3 cup celery 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock 1 tablespoon

olive oil or butter salt and pepper to taste Optional - 2 tablespoons rubbed

sage (if you like strong sage flavor, use it) 1. Sweat carrot, onion and

celery in the oil in sauce pot, add salt and pepper. Pour the 4

cups of stock and bring to boil. 2. While stock and vegetables are cooking,

break up dried bread and run through food processor. If it has some large

pieces, that's OK - it adds texture. 3. Break up cornbread or whole wheat

bread and mix the two together well in large bowl. Add rubbed sage if

you are using it. 4. Strain vegetables out of stock, and mix into bread

mix. Add about 3 cups of the stock to the bread mix. Mix well

and test for dryness. If you like moist dressing, you will most likely use

all 4 cups, a lot will depend on how dry you got the stuffing

bread. 5. Grease an 8-by-8-inch casserole dish, put stuffing mix in dish. Cover with

foil and bake in a 400 degree oven for 25 minutes, remove foil and

bake another 15 minutes. Note from Rick Miller: "I like to add cooked ground

sausage and dried Craisins to my stuffing. If you want pure vegetarian, there are vegetarian corn bread mixes on the market. Farrell's corn bread is made with cornmeal, untreated unbleached flour, milk, butter, egg, baking powder, salt and sugar. Farrell's stuffing bread contains only unbleached natural flour, water, salt, and yeast plus the herbs." ROASTED SWEET POTATOES WITH PECANS AND SPICED MAPLE SAUCE 2/3 cup roughly chopped pecans 3 pounds sweet potatoes, cut into large dice Salt and pepper 2 tablespoons vegetable oil 4 tablespoons unsalted butter 3 tablespoons maple syrup 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper 1. Heat oven to 450 degrees and arrange rack in the middle. While oven heats, place pecans on a baking sheet to toast until they smell nutty and are slightly darker, about five minutes. Remove from oven and set aside. 2. Place sweet potatoes on a baking sheet, drizzle with oil. Season well with salt and freshly ground black pepper, and toss to coat. Roast until golden brown and tender when pierced with a knife, about 40 to 45 minutes. 3. Meanwhile, melt butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. When it foams, stir in maple syrup and cayenne and let cook briefly, about one minute. Serve sweet potatoes with a drizzle of maple butter and a scattering of pecans. - Adapted from foodnetwork.com

SIMPLE ROAST TURKEY WITH

A RICH TURKEY GRAVY 1 (16 pound) turkey at room temperature 1 hour, any feathers and quills removed with tweezers or needlenose pliers, and neck and giblets removed and reserved for another use if desired 1 tablespoon salt 1 3/4 teaspoons black pepper 2 cups water 7 to 8 cups turkey stock 1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter 3/4 cup all-purpose flour 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons cider vinegar

Make turkey: 1. Put oven rack in lowest position and preheat oven to 450 degrees. Rinse turkey inside and out, then pat dry. Sprinkle turkey cavities and skin with salt and pepper. Fold neck skin under body and secure with metal skewers, then tie drumsticks together with kitchen string and tuck wings under body. 2. Put turkey on rack in roasting pan. Add 1 cup water to pan and roast

without basting, rotating pan halfway through roasting, until thermometer inserted into fleshy part of thighs (test both thighs; do not touch bones) registers 170 degrees, 2 1/4 to 2 3/4 hours. 3. Carefully tilt turkey so any juices from inside large cavity run into roasting pan, then transfer turkey to a platter, reserving juices in roasting pan. Let turkey stand, uncovered, 30 minutes (temperature of thigh meat will rise to 180 degrees). Make gravy while turkey stands: 1. Pour pan juices through a fine-mesh sieve into measuring cup (do not clean roasting pan), then skim off and discard fat. (If using a fat separator, pour pan juices through sieve into separator and let stand until fat rises to top, 1 to 2 minutes. Carefully pour pan juices from separator into measure, discarding fat.) 2. Straddle roasting pan across 2 burners, then add remaining cup water and deglaze roasting pan by boiling over high heat, stirring and scraping up brown bits, 1 minute. Pour through sieve into measuring cup containing pan juices. Add enough turkey stock to pan juices to bring total to 8 cups. (If stock is congealed, heat to liquefy.) 3. Melt butter in a 4-quart heavy pot and stir in flour. Cook roux over moderate heat, whisking, 5 minutes. Add stock mixture in a stream, whisking constantly to prevent lumps, then bring to a boil, whisking occasionally. Stir in any turkey juices accumulated on platter and simmer 5 minutes. Season gravy with salt and pepper, then stir in cider vinegar (to taste). - Adapted from Epicurious.com

PECAN PIE Serves 6-8

Crust: 1 1/4 cup flour 1 tablespoon cornmeal 1/2 cup butter, cut in cubes 1/2 teaspoon salt 3-4 tablespoons water 4-5 tablespoons extra flour

1. Place flour, cornmeal, butter and salt in a food processor. Mix for about 1-2 minutes, until a sand-like mixture forms. Slowly add water until the mix forms a ball of dough. Form into a ball, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for half an hour. 2. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Roll dough into an 11-inch round on a floured surface. Place dough into a 9-inch pie tin. Use your fingers to have the dough fit firmly

into the pan. Use either a fork or your fingers to make a decorative edge. Prick dough with a fork and line the dough-filled pie pan with aluminum foil. 3. Fill the lined pan with dried bean or pie weights. Bake for 8-10 minutes, then remove foil and beans/pie weights and bake uncovered for another 8-10 minutes. Set aside to cool. Filling: 1 1/4 cup pecans 1 cup dark corn syrup 1/4 cup white sugar 1/4 cup brown sugar 1/4 cup butter 1/4 teaspoon salt 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon 1 tablespoon vanilla extract 3 eggs 1. Mix all of the above ingredients together with a whisk until well blended. Add pecans. 2. Place filling into baked pie crust. Place in the oven for 1 hour. Remove and cool completely before serving. - Adapted from the National Pecan Growers Association Shop local Natural Farms, 420 South Utica Ave., 918-583-5354 Tulsa Clean Food Market, tulsaworld.com/cleanfood Oklahoma Cooperative, tulsaworld.com/okfoodcoop Made in Oklahoma, tulsaworld.com/mio The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, tulsaworld.com/sustainablekerr Green Country, tulsaworld.com/sustainablegreencountry Nicole Marshall Middleton 918-581-8459 nicole.marshall@tulsaworld.com with local foods Original Print Headline: Homegrown holiday