

A Minnesota Table

Celebrating Thanksgiving with Minnesota Grown

NOVEMBER 2014

www.minnesotagrown.com



Photo Courtesy of [Treasured Haven Farm](#) in Rush City, Minnesota

When asked why buying local produce for your Thanksgiving meal is important, Jean Braatz from [My Minnesota Farmer, LLC](#) in Montgomery shares that “It’s all about the flavor! Local produce is picked at its prime and delivered fresh just down the road from where it was grown. You just can’t beat the flavors that nature produces naturally.” Jean raises both heritage and traditional birds on pasture, processes them right on the farm, and then delivers the poultry fresh to consumers right before Thanksgiving. “We are so thankful for people who enjoy a fresh Thanksgiving bird and support their local farmers!” Braatz says.

The centerpiece of many Thanksgiving dinners is the turkey, and [My Minnesota Farmer, LLC](#) is one of over [20 turkey producers](#) listed in the Minnesota Grown online Directory. Quantities can be limited, so it is important to contact your farm early to reserve your

turkey. [Visit our website](#) for a list of producers near you, or ask your local butcher if they carry locally raised turkey.

The method of preparing your centerpiece can vary from roasting, to grilling, to [bacon-wrapped and herb roasted](#), but often times it’s the accompaniments that make your meal truly memorable! [My Minnesota Farm, LLC](#) also offers fresh and preserved Thanksgiving boxes with items like onions, potatoes, carrots and beets, or frozen corn and beans, relish and jam. With options like this, it is simple to fill the holiday table with delicious locally grown produce!

Side dishes vary from table to table, but are always a pleasing addition to the turkey. Minnesota Grown products can be easily incorporated into a traditional Thanksgiving meal, or you can start a new tradition with your family centered on fresh, local foods! Here are a few side dish suggestions using products from Minnesota Grown producers. Click on each headline for a list of our members. Happy cooking!

Potatoes: Did you know that Minnesota ranks 6th in potato production in the United States? Potatoes are high in vitamin C and potassium and have a low caloric count. They are also fat, cholesterol and sodium free! Not only are potatoes delicious, but they are a highly versatile vegetable. They can be baked or broiled, smashed or mixed with seasonings and ingredients to enhance the flavor.

Carrots: Most people think orange when they think of carrots, but they can also be purple, white, yellow or red. Carrots are an excellent source of beta-carotene, which is good for eyesight and skin health. Carrots also have higher sugar content than most other vegetables, making them an excellent raw snack and a delicious part of other dishes.

Winter Squash: This fruit (most often prepared as a vegetable) is quickly becoming a popular side and even main dish at dinner tables across the state. It is commonly prepared during the holiday season! Winter squash are high in vitamin A, C and fiber and come in many varieties that are easily stored. Did you know that you can bake the seeds of squash just like pumpkin seeds?

Wild Rice: Wild rice is a staple here in Minnesota. Why not make it a part of your Thanksgiving dinner? Wild rice is a semi-aquatic grass that grows naturally in lakes, river beds and bays as well as being cultivated in man-made paddies. It generally grows in water that is just 2-4 feet deep. Wild rice is high in protein and fiber. You can add it to almost any dish, but it's often used in salads. It is also commonly found in soups, like the Minnesota favorite chicken wild rice! Try adding it to your favorite stuffing recipe for a unique twist on the traditional.

Apples: Apples are easily stored well beyond Thanksgiving, which can make them a great side dish as well as a dessert. Many orchards still have plenty of later season varieties and stored apples for you to pick up! Try the recipe for apple cranberry pie and be sure to incorporate Minnesota Grown apples for extra flavor!

Wine: Toast to the things you are thankful for this holiday season with a local, Minnesota Grown and produced wine. Try visiting a Minnesota winery to pick up wine for your Thanksgiving dinner or for a host/hostess gift! Now is also a great time to visit one of six Minnesota wine trails featured by the Minnesota Grape Growers Association. Visit the website at MinnesotaGrown.com for more information.



Photo Courtesy of Whispering Oaks Winery in Melrose, MN

Cheese: Minnesota cheese makes for a great appetizer around the holidays, and can also make a great host/hostess gift. In addition to being eaten alone, Minnesota cheeses shine as an important component of many of our favorite Thanksgiving recipes. Try a local product the next time you prepare cheesy hash brown casserole!

Milk: Although milk purchased from any grocery store is a product from a local dairy, consider visiting the Minnesota Grown directory to find a member producer near you. Minnesota Grown lists 23 producers who offer their products direct from the farm. Purchase from a dairy offering their product in glass bottles and you have an instant table decoration and a great conversation piece!

If you have been planning ahead, or if you have utilized some of our storage and preservations tips from over the summer, now would be an excellent time to pull out some of your canned or frozen Minnesota Grown produce! If you would like to preserve late season produce like winter squash and pumpkins, visit this handy site from the University of Minnesota Extension.

Of course, Thanksgiving dinner would be complete without dessert! A traditional pumpkin pie is a quick and easy way to incorporate Minnesota Grown produce into your holiday celebration. Many orchards and pumpkin patches have bakeries or gift shops open into November and sell frozen pies for your convenience. What an easy, stress-free way to get a local, homemade pie for dessert! Any Thanksgiving dessert is sure to taste better when made with Minnesota Grown products. Call your local apple orchard or pumpkin patch today!

Have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving, and be sure to tell your local, Minnesota farmers that you are thankful for them!

Visit the "[Minnesota Table](#)" board on the [Minnesota Grown Pinterest](#) page for more ideas and suggestions for incorporating local produce into your Thanksgiving meal!