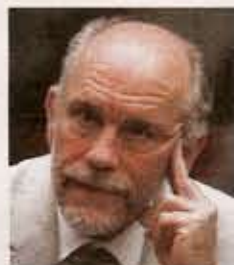


# Living



“Everything started because my partners and I were horrified at seeing these little kids crossing the border.”

JOHN MALKOVICH

Actor/director speaking about upcoming film “Triple Crossing”

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Don't feel bad because you can't celebrate Thanksgiving back home in the United States. When Nov. 27 comes around, fix up your own harvest feast right here in Mexico.

BY NICHOLAS GILMAN  
Special to The News

A story from Mexico City that appeared in The New York Times on Nov. 27, 1902, read as follows: “A Thanksgiving ball was given tonight by the American Colony of this city and was largely attended, President Diaz being among the invited guests. The affair was a great social success, many representatives of the highest society of Mexico being present.”

Now more than a century later, as many as 1 million U.S. citizens live in Mexico, and we, too, may wish to celebrate the oldest and most beloved American holiday.

And while we may not attract the president, or even any representatives of the highest society to our dinner tables, there's nothing stopping us from recreating a traditional Turkey Day feast here in Mexico. In fact, it's not only possible but easy as pie.

Most large supermarkets sell everything you need – fat turkeys, sweet potatoes, stuffing mix and so forth.

I, however, prefer to shop at the extraordinary San Juan Market in the center of Mexico City and buy my fixings there.

This unusual market, located a few blocks below the Alameda, has been serving the foreign community since colonial times, providing some of the best local and imported foods available. Several stands sell beautiful, plump farm-raised gobblers, free of fat injections and nasty chemicals. And if you're squeamish, the butcher will discreetly eliminate the head and feet for you. But you'll have to baste it yourself, like granny did.

I suggest soaking a cheesecloth pad in butter and placing it over the breast. Throw a little of the pan juices on every now and then to keep it from drying



Pearl onions are not hard to find.



Sweet potatoes are also a favorite.

out. The taste of these birds is incomparable, and they can be reserved ahead of time.

While “camotes,” the pale Mexican version of the sweet potato, are readily available, they are not as sweet and don't have that evocative orange color. Not to worry. Señora García at stand No. 218 will take care of you. She sells the yams we all remember.

I like to bake them, then mash with orange juice and lots of butter, spread in a baking dish, top with sliced, peeled apples, brown sugar, more butter, and brown in a hot oven. This is my Brooklyn grandmother's recipe.

I won't give you her turkey recipe, as she always overcooked it. You can, however, pick up some pre-shucked oysters at the nearby seafood stands if you like them in the stuffing.

Moving down the aisle, stop at No. 260, which is Herme-



## DRIED CRANBERRY SAUCE /MEXICAN DRIED CRANBERRY SALSA

### Recipe ingredients:

2 cup dried cranberries  
1 cup apples, cored and chopped  
2 tablespoon butter  
2 cups cranberry juice  
Juice and grated peel of 1 orange  
1/4 cup sugar, or to taste  
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract  
(Optional) for a Mexican touch:  
1 dried guajillo chili, rehydrated in “piloncillo” (brown sugar) water and finely chopped  
2 tablespoon raw pumpkin seeds, chopped for garnish

### To prepare the relish:

Sauté the cranberries and apples in the butter. When the cranberries have plumped up add the rest of the ingredients. Let simmer for 1/2 hour. It should have a thick consistency, if not allow to simmer 15 minutes more. Stir to avoid sticking

or burning. When thick, cool and refrigerate.

Can be served hot or cold.

### Mexican version:

Add the guajillo chilies for the last 10 minutes for a subtle effect. Garnish sauce with the crushed pumpkin seeds.

As for the pies, well, I just haven't found a good American-style one down here. You'll just have to do it yourself. Pull out the old Joy of Cooking and get to work.

They do sell pre-made piecrusts at the super, if you want to cheat, but I think cheating in the kitchen is best left to other holidays, definitely not Thanksgiving.

All that said, you might decide to forget the whole thing and go out for tacos.



Butchers at the San Juan Market offer plump, farm-raised gobblers.



Victoria García sells the yams we remember from Thanksgivings past.

all the Brussels sprouts, green beans, nuts and yellow potatoes you need.

But what about the cranberry dilemma? Fresh ones are as rare here as good tamales on Park Avenue. You may find the tinned jellied variety at your local Sumesa, but serving that wouldn't be fair to your other

princely culinary creations.

If you're lucky enough to procure a bag of the real stuff at Sam's Club or through a clever smuggler/visitor from the United States, good for you.

If not, Ruth Alegría, culinary tour operator and chef, offers her version using dried cranberries (“arándanos” in Span-

## WHERE TO

Big supermarkets are not the only shopping option.

**Thanksgiving shopping:** Mercado San Juan (Calle Ernesto Pugibet, between Buen Tono and Luis Moya)  
**Turkeys:** Gourmet Gastronómica González, stands #95-97, Tels. 5510-2094 and 5518-6101.

**Sweet and other potatoes:** Sra. García Valdez, stand #218, Tels. 5521-9879, 5512-6360

**Pearl Onions:** Sra. Guillén, stand #260, Tel. 5521-6165; you will find all the fruits you need for your pies around the corner.

**Pre-baked turkeys to go:** La Casa Del Pavo, Motolinia 40, Centro, Tel. 5518-4282. If you don't want to do it yourself this is a great alternative. Call in advance to order your bird.

## EAT OUT

You don't have to do Thanksgiving at home on Nov. 27.

If you want to have someone else cook for you, why not try the Thanksgiving dinner offered by the American Legion? They are located in a beautiful Art Deco house at Celaya 25 in the Condesa (Tel. 5564-4490). For 150 pesos they will serve a full dinner starting at 2 p.m. Here's another option: The American Benevolent Society is also offering its annual Thanksgiving Day feast, starting at 1 p.m. at Christ Church. The church is located at Montes Escandinavos 405, Lomas de Chapultepec. For tickets and more information, call the ABS office at 5540-5123.

ish), which are widely available here.

Of course, one of the benefits of being a gringo in Mexico at Thanksgiving is that you're free to celebrate it any way you like – or even not at all.

Stanton Gray and his partner Bill Reiner have lived in San Miguel de Allende since 1996. Asked about Thanksgiving in Mexico, Gray said, “I love the freedom. ... The holiday doesn't exist here, so we can do exactly what we want. We've done the traditional turkey dinner, but sometimes we just hang out with Mexican friends who don't even know what's going on, or sometimes we just forget about it.”

# TURKEY DAY

## DOING IT YOURSELF IN MEXICO CITY