

## Menu

Vermont Cheese Board

[Lemon Thyme Roast Chicken](#)

[Whipped Butternut Squash](#)

Steam-Sautéed Green Beans

[Apple Pie](#)

## The Game Plan

*Scroll to the bottom of this step-by-step list for a few guidelines for adapting the game plan to fit your needs.*

The day before:

*(10 minutes)*

- Unwrap, dry, and salt the chicken, and leave it in the refrigerator uncovered overnight.

Early in the day or the day before, whatever's best for your schedule:

*(40 minutes)*

- Cut and freeze the butter and lard for the pie crust.
- Peel, cube and simmer the butternut squash.
- While the squash is simmering, make the pie crust dough, wrap and chill it.
- Prepare the Whipped Butternut Squash mixture through to the point at which you've whipped it into a puree. Transfer the mixture to a storage container and chill it.

Early in the day:

*(30 minutes of hands on time plus 1 hour for the pie to bake)*

- Put 6 tablespoons of butter in a small bowl and leave it out at room temperature to soften.
- Assemble and bake the pie.
- Load the dishwasher (if you have one) and hand wash and dry any dishes that aren't dishwasher safe. Run the dishwasher, and when it's done, empty it.

3 hours before dinner:

*(30 minutes, then quick checks on the chicken for a few minutes every half hour for two hours)*

- Take the cheese for the appetizer out of the refrigerator and let it sit at room temperature.
- Heat the oven for the roast chicken.
- Mash the herbs and lemon zest into the butter that's been softening since earlier in the day, to make the herb butter for the chicken.
- Butter, oil and truss the chicken put it in the oven.
- Set the table.
- For the next two hours or until the chicken is done, check on it every 30 minutes or so to baste it, turn it, and toward the end to check it for doneness.

2 hours before dinner:

*(20 minutes, not including the time spent eating the appetizer)*

- Butter a casserole dish and spoon the Whipped Butternut Squash mixture into it. Leave it out at room temperature.

- Wash and trim the green beans, and set them aside for later.
- Slice and arrange the cheese with some crackers, fresh or dried fruits, or other nibbles as desired.
- Enjoy the cheese board with a glass of wine.
- When you're done, handwash and/or load the dishwasher with any dishes used for the appetizer.

30 minutes before dinner:

*(15 minutes)*

- Open the dinner wine to let it breathe.
- Take the chicken out of the oven, remove it to a cutting board or platter, and tent it with foil.
- Put the Whipped Butternut Squash in the oven.
- Make the gravy, then transfer it to a small saucepan and move it to a back burner on low heat to stay warm until serving.
- Fill the roasting pan with warm soapy water and put it someplace out of the way (on a heat-proof surface), to soak during dinner.

15 minutes before dinner:

*(15 minutes)*

- Steam-sauté the green beans:
  - Put the green beans (one handful per person) into a skillet with 1 or 2 tablespoons of water.
  - Cover the skillet and heat it over high heat until the water comes to a boil. Cook the beans for 2 minutes if they're thin, 3 minutes if they're thicker.
  - Remove the lid and cook for 1 minute on high heat until the water evaporates. If all the water doesn't evaporate, sop the excess up with a paper towel.
  - Lower the heat to medium, swirl in a swig of extra-virgin olive oil, and add a sprinkle of kosher salt and black pepper to taste. Cook, tossing, for a few more minutes until the beans are crisp-tender.
- Mince the parsley for garnishing the squash.
- Light the candles.
- Start the dinner music.
- Carve the chicken.

After dinner:

- Cut the pie.

Notes:

- The hands-on work time estimates (in parentheses below the start times) are for one person doing it all, but many tasks can be shared or delegated.
- We like to have the appetizer about 2 hours before dinner, then have a little time to relax before getting on with the rest of the meal. This schedule reflects that timing. If you prefer to serve the appetizer closer to dinner, start the appetizer prep 1 hour later than indicated here.