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To cook or not to cook? That's today's Thanksgiving question



Executive chef Roberto Villa of Viva Restaurant is offering an a la cart Thanksgiving menu for individuals and a family style meal for parties of at least four people. The family meal is served on big platters, just like home. (George Sakkestad/Staff Photographer)

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If cooking a traditional Thanksgiving feast seems like way too much work, then Los Gatos has just the answer for you. Local grocery stores are offering meals to go that only require dishes to be reheated; you avoid the prep work but not the cleanup.

Prices and menus vary greatly, with a \$49.99 turkey meal available from Safeway. Nob Hill's turkey dinners start at \$69.99, and Lunardi's full-course meal is \$129.99.

The turkey dinner diva at Whole Foods said, "We have a bunch of dinners to choose from," including a \$39.99 vegan meal for two, a \$69.99 turkey dinner for four and a feast for 12 that costs \$249.99, and includes both a turkey and a ham.

If you do decide to go the precooked route, be sure to order well in advance. Nob Hill, for instance, advises that dinners should be ordered by Saturday, Nov. 18, for pickup on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 23.

Also be sure to check store hours as many grocery stores close early on Thanksgiving Day to allow employees time with family.

Another option is to go out to dinner, although an unofficial survey of the major restaurants in town found only four that plan to be open Thanksgiving Day.

VERGE Restaurant at the Toll House Hotel, 140 S. Santa Cruz Ave., is serving a Thanksgiving buffet with seatings at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. In addition to turkey and prime rib carving stations, the buffet features leg of lamb, a seafood bar, salads, desserts and unlimited mimosas.

The buffet costs \$69.95 for adults, \$29.95 for children 6-12 years old. For reservations, visit vergerestaurant.com/reservations or call 408-884-1054.

The Los Gatos Lodge, 50 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road, is also offering a Thanksgiving Day buffet that includes appetizers, turkey and side dishes, desserts, and champagne or wine. The cost is \$35.

Seatings are at 11:30 a.m., noon, 1:30 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Call 408-354-3300 for reservations.

You can get a family-style Thanksgiving dinner at Viva, 15970 Los Gatos Blvd., between noon and 8 p.m. Viva is also offering an a la cart menu on Thanksgiving Day at \$23 for adults and \$8 for children 12 and under.

The family-style menu is available for parties of four or more and costs \$38 for adults and \$23 for kids 12 and under.

“If you order the family-style menu, we’ll serve it on platters like you do at home,” Viva manager Mike Binschus said. “It includes a bruschetta appetizer, two salads, the main turkey course, desserts and, of course, pumpkin pie. And if they really like something, like mashed potatoes, we’ll bring more out.”

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Binschus says Viva is getting “quite a few” reservation requests, and you can still make one by calling 408-356-4902.

Hult’s owner Alex Hult expects his restaurant at 165 Los Gatos-Saratoga Road to be busy on Thanksgiving Day between 11 a.m. and 8 p.m. Hult’s already has 150 reservations booked, and Hult predicts, “We’ll feed 400 by the time it’s all over. It’s one of our busiest holidays.”

Hult’s is serving a three-course, multi-option prix fixe meal that includes a choice of soup, salad or a Swedish meatball appetizer. Main courses are salmon, short ribs, sweet potato and pecan ravioli or turkey.

“Only about 50 percent of our customers choose turkey,” Hult said.

Side dishes are served family style, and dessert includes bread pudding or cobbler.

Hult’s Thanksgiving dinner is \$59 per person. Call 408-354-3434 for reservations.

While there are plenty of options to stuff yourself on Thanksgiving, remember it’s a calorie-packed day. The Calorie Control Council estimates a typical American consumes 4,500 calories on this special occasion.