

Home Cooking Episode 12 Transcript

- Samin: Of all of the processed foods to bring to your Thanksgiving table cranberry sauce is like the least processed. It's not filled with like, 99 jellos.
- Hrishi: Yeah, if you got 99 jellos I'd feel bad for you son. I've got 99 jellos.
- Samin: Cranberry's not one.
- Hrishi: What is even happening?
- Samin: I'm Samin Nosrat.
- Hrishi: I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.
- Samin: We're Home Cooking.
- Hrishi: This is episode 12 of our four-part series, and part one of a two-part series within that four-part series dedicated to Thanksgiving and how the heck we're going to do all the Thanksgiving things this year.
- Samin: Wow, that was a lot of math.
- Hrishi: We're going to talk about some of our own Thanksgiving recipes in part two, but for now. We've got a lot of questions to get through. So just like Thanksgiving dinner, let's get into it way too early.
- Samin: Okay.
- Hrishi: I mean, normally, I eat dinner at 7:30. Thanksgiving dinner starts at 3:30.
- Samin: 2:00. Some people start at 11 am.
- Hrishi: Wow. Yeah, on Thanksgiving, there are no rules.
- Samin: There's no rules. Except, there are a lot of people who have a lot of rules. That's the thing.
- Hrishi: Exactly. Yeah, but maybe one of the rules in your house is that you can start eating dinner at 11:00 AM.

Samin: Totally. Yeah. My rule, unfortunately, I mean, this is the opposite of a rule, is that I end up cooking all day and tasting so much that by the time it's time to sit down, I'm sick to my stomach.

Hrishi: Oh, yeah. The actual act of eating on Thanksgiving is-

Samin: Is punishment. Also, it's like day three of being on vacation. I've also eaten seven layer dip.

Hrishi: Yeah, exactly. So I have planned out our questions to follow roughly the course of a meal, I think. And so, I want to start with an appetizer or maybe this counts as a side. I'm not really sure but this question comes from Anna.

Anna: My question is around the classic green bean casserole. So I live in Brooklyn now, but originally from Wisconsin, and I don't think I've ever had a Thanksgiving at home where this hasn't been present, and it's delicious, but I always have the sense that it could be even more delicious and perhaps a little bit more wholesome. So my understanding of how it's made, which is usually done by my mom or grandmother, is a can of cream of mushroom soup goes into what I assume are frozen green beans, and probably some other stuff goes in there as well and then topped with fried onions and baked into crispy golden perfection. Although it is delicious, as I said, I always feel a little gross after eating it. So I'm wondering if you guys have any thoughts on how to make it more wholesome, more delicious, and basically a re-imagined look at green bean casserole

Samin: Ooh, I love this question.

Hrishi: Awesome.

Samin: For the record, I didn't grow up with Thanksgiving. I've never had green bean casserole.

Hrishi: Actually, I haven't either.

Samin: But I do have some recommendations of how I would sort of lighten it and modernize it, absolutely.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: So what I would do is I would start with fresh green beans from the farmer's market or grocery store, and I would trim them. I would lightly blanch them and set them aside, and then I would make a very thin béchamel sauce using flour and butter to make a roux. And the way you make it thinner or thicker is by controlling the amount of milk that you add to your roux. So I would add a little bit more milk than the normal, than the recipe suggests. And I have a great recipe that we actually linked to last week, so we'll link to it again. And then I would think about all the other things that make cream of mushroom soup taste delicious. So clearly, there's mushrooms in there. So I would probably start with just some delicious sort of button mushrooms and saute them.

Hrishi: Oh, you're going to sub out the whole cream of mushroom soup situation. I guess I just thought for something like this, you'd need to have the mushroom soup as a part of it.

Samin: Oh, yeah. I think that that's a big part of what's making it too gloopy and too thick and too rich and cloying for her and heavy.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: So I think you can leave all that out and then you just have a really nice homemade béchamel sauce that ends up being the total volume of this can of soup and the milk that you were adding. Then yeah, you can still add some soy sauce. You can add some black pepper. You add your home-cooked mushrooms and onions. You could add some delicious, nice, fresh herbs right at the end, some parsley and thyme. And you could make your own, instead of using pre-made, store-bought, French-fried onions, you could make some slow-cooked shallot rings that you fry in oil until they're golden and brown and put those on top and bake that in the oven. That's sort of a lighter, more modern version, and you're still getting that casserole yumminess, and that flour in the béchamel is still going to bind it. You're still having every bit of sort of all of those little flavors that make it green bean casserole, but it's not that processed taste.

Hrishi: You're just winging this. You have not actually had it.

Samin: No, but that's exactly how I would do it. I think it would totally work.

Hrishi: Yeah. No, I like it. This is exciting. I mean, I like when you're riffing. I like the idea, it's like throwing a knife blindfolded. It's just exhilarating to witness.

Samin: I also suspect, I mean, I don't think that I'm that creative. I suspect that if I Googled this and we looked up a New York Times or a Bon Appetit or some other credible source for a recipe, it would basically step-by-step be exactly the same thing. But I really appreciate your wonder is really making my ego feel really good right now.

Hrishi: Okay, good.

Samin: Let's keep going.

Hrishi: Let's keep going. Yeah.

Samin: This feels good, because I feel like I get to impress you, and it's like I've had a hard day. So today I'm going to feel really good about myself.

Hrishi: Okay, good. I'm going to spin the wheel.

Samin: Are you going to put in a wheel sound effect here, like ... [Wheel Sound Effect]

Hrishi: Next thing that comes up on the wheel of sides is cranberry sauce. We have a couple questions about cranberry sauce, and I want to want to play both of them.

Samin: Okay. Hit me.

Sean: Hi, y'all. This is Sean from Portland, Oregon with a cranberry conundrum.

Samin: Conundrum?

Sean: So during the holidays growing up in my family, the cranberry sauce was kind of an afterthought just getting plopped on a plate out of a can last minute. As you can imagine, it wasn't my favorite, but I do know for some people, the cranberry sauce is what brings the whole meal together. My wife is one of those people. I'm wondering if you have a delicious cranberry sauce recipe so I can help make my wife's holiday a little better, and who knows? Maybe I'll join team cranberry sauce.

Hrishi: Team cranberry sauce, by the way, has never won a world series.

Samin: Rude. I'm so anti-you right now because I feel like team cranberry sauce is the only team to be on, on Thanksgiving, and I will explain why shortly. So any jokes anti-team cranberry sauce, I will not stand for.

Hrishi: No, I'm just saying team cranberry sauce-

Samin: No, no, no like, no, no, no. Like not even making fun in a theoretical sports way is okay. Okay?

Hrishi: All right. I'm going to give you a little complication. Sean does not like the canned cranberry. Here's a question from Liz though.

Liz: My name is Liz and something you need to know about me is that I am a trash goblin who really likes canned cranberry sauce.

Samin: A trash goblin?

Liz: My mother on the other hand really likes homemade cranberry sauce with whole cranberries. I was wondering if you guys had any recipes or ideas for homemade cranberry sauce, that is more of the texture of canned cranberry sauce. Thank you.

Hrishi: So here I'm throwing you a needle to thread. Can you come up with a solution that solves both Liz's desire for homemade cranberry sauce that feels like canned cranberry sauce, while also giving Sean a delicious cranberry sauce recipe that is better than the cranberry sauce that left Sean wanting more from it.

Samin: Okay. Yes and no. The answer is basically water and sugar.

Hrishi: I think we're going to need a few more words than that, to really make sense of it.

Samin: Water and sugar, next.

Hrishi: Next.

Samin: Got it everyone? Okay so, let's start with Sean and then I'll use the answer to Sean's question to sort of answer, Liz. For Sean, my preferred cranberry sauce is cranberry with quince. And that's just because quince

is a really lovely fruit that I love working into things at this time of year. I find that cranberry and quince are a lovely pairing

Hrishi: For those people out there, definitely not me, but you know lets say slightly less food savvy people. Could you explain what a quince is?

Samin: Sure. Mm-hmm (affirmative) not you.

Hrishi: Not me.

Samin: A quince is a fruit. It's a beautiful fruit, that is related to an apple. It kind of looks like a lumpy misshapen precursor to an Apple. It's also related to a rose-

Hrishi: Wait, what?

Samin: Well, apples are related to roses.

Hrishi: Wow. I didn't know that.

Samin: You can't really eat quince raw because it's very tannic and it'll dry your mouth out. It's not pleasant to eat raw, so you have to cook it and you have to cook it with a lot of sugar or you have to cook it in wine. It's really nice to cook with meats and braizes and things like that. But traditionally, it's cooked with a lot of sugar into jams, marmalades or into fruit pastes. And it comes into season at this time of year, in the fall and it has a really delightful fragrance and one of the things I like to do with it is put it in my cranberry sauce. I can't tell you why, it's a nice thing I like to do in the fall and I have a recipe for it, I will link to it. It's also a classic Iranian ingredient and it's a way for me to bring a Persian flavor to the Thanksgiving table. Guess what else I like to put in my cranberry sauce?

Hrishi: A Persian Mulberry.

Samin: No. It's one of the ones that other people might think is just a piece of trash.

Hrishi: Oh, bay leaf?

Samin: Yeah.

Hrishi: So you put quince and bay leaves?

Samin: Cranberries are very, very tart. So I like a really, really simple flavorings in my cranberry sauce. I think they take a fair amount of sugar, some water. You're basically making a jam when you make cranberry sauce. You're making a really simple jam. Depending on how much sugar and how much water you use and how long you cook it, that's going to be what determines the texture of that jam. And whether it becomes a jelly, whether it becomes super stiff, whether it's looser, thicker, sweeter, more acidic, all of that. So that's where the answer to this question is going, for both of these question askers and there are different things that we can do to control the texture and the taste. So I like a pretty loose and pretty tart cranberry sauce for a couple of reasons. One, I can see already see your eyes!

Hrishi: I also like my tarts pretty loose.

Samin: This is a children's show.

Hrishi: They don't understand what I'm saying.

Samin: One of the reasons I advocate for a pretty acidic or tart cranberry sauce is because on a typical Thanksgiving table, there's so much richness and saltiness. There's so much fat. There's so much starch. On a typical Thanksgiving table, the only source of acidity is cranberry sauce. And so I really like that to be very bright, very acidic. I want every bite that I eat to have cranberry sauce on it because that's what wakes up my palette. That's what makes things really exciting. And I'm actually an advocate of other condiments on the table too. I like a little herby salsa verde with fried sage in it because I want there to be more sources of acid so that there are things perking up every bite that I eat because I think that, that's why after just a few bites often, Thanksgiving can become really heavy and you're just like, "I can't eat anymore." And you're like, "I have to fall asleep."

Hrishi: That makes so much sense now. Now, I understand, when I was growing up, why I always loved, you know, we would always combine American Thanksgiving with a full Indian dinner. Now, I understand why I always loved having a little bit of spicy Indian pickle on the side and I would mix that in with my stuffing.

Samin: I bet!

Hrishi: Back then and really for a long time, before I read your book, I used to think of these things in music terms. I used to think about them as bass and treble and I would always be like, oh, this food is too bassey, it needs a little bit of treble. And I realize now the treble that I was looking for was acid.

Samin: Mmh-hmm (affirmative) That's exactly it, that's exactly it. We'll link to my cranberry sauce recipe. The other thing I think a classic cranberry sauce often has is a strip or two of orange zest and even the juice of half for a whole orange. A little bit of that. You can even put a little piece of cinnamon stick in there, if you wanted to or juniper berry. I'll link to a couple of recipes for you. It's a really simple thing to do. It's usually one of the very last things I make before I go to the table and it's not difficult at all. Frankly, it's really inexpensive to also buy a can of cranberry sauce. You can have both.

Hrishi: And so how do you get the consistency of your homemade cranberry sauce into a place that'll feel right for the trash goblin?

Samin: For the trash goblin, which I'm a trash goblin too. So I love that. I'm always gobbling the trash. So if you want, you can leave out quince or you can put it in. You don't have to do that step. But what I would do is make some homemade cranberry sauce that appeases your mom and maybe make it a little bit more watery. And then you probably will want yours to be sweeter and have some amount that's less watery.

Hrishi: Wait, you're suggesting two different batches of cranberry sauce.

Samin: No, what I would do is make a larger batch and then take half of it out and then add some more sugar to half of it. And that'll be your batch and add some more water.

Hrishi: Wait, she's going to add water for her mom to make it less like canned cranberry sauce?

Samin: Correct. The one that will please her mom will be a little bit thinner, like a more sort of preserve, homemade texture. And then the one for herself will be a little bit stiffer and a little bit sweeter. And then she will take an

immersion blender, a stick, if she has one, if not, she'll put the whole thing in a food processor or in a regular blender and zap it until it's quite smooth. And then the trick that's pretty fun, if you want, is you can take a can an empty can from something from chickpeas or whatever you got, and you can spray it with some canola oil or some cooking spray and then pour that cranberry sauce in there and let it set in the fridge. And then you can unmold it. So you can have your own homemade cranberry sauce from a can.

Hrishi: In the shape of a can, in the little cylindrical glop.

Samin: And then you glop it out. Exactly. I added the step of the oil. You probably don't even need to do that.

Hrishi: That's great. Here's a question, Samin. We've talked about this a little bit in the past. My way of cooking a lot of times I'll just take a thing that's supposed to be ready-made and then modify it and make it my own. And I'm wondering with that kind of approach, is there a way for somebody to work with canned cranberry sauce and improve it. Start with the canned cranberry sauce and then zhuzh it up.

Samin: Oh, totally.

Hrishi: What would you do in that case?

Samin: In that case, I would take the canned cranberry. I would heat it up with some water and I would acidify it. I think it tends to be pretty thick and pretty sweet. So I think I would add some of my favorite ingredients, some bay leaf and then I would squeeze the juice of a half an orange. Maybe use a vegetable peeler to throw in the zest of like two strips of orange zest in there. Let that simmer for 20 minutes. And then if I felt so moved, I would add a spice, whether that's a cardamom pod, two juniper berries.

Hrishi: Or your cinnamon stick?

Samin: Yeah, one of those, not all of them. Just to, sort of, let it get a little something. Another thing I think is sometimes nice in cranberry sauce is a little bit of heat. A little bit of cayenne pepper or a little bit of dried red chili

or I think chipotles are kind of nice, a little bit of that smoky heat is nice in there too. Any of those things are kind of nice to add in there.

Hrishi: Wait, Samin, if you did not grow up eating Thanksgiving dinner, at what point did you become team cranberry sauce?

Samin: Literally the very first time because I grew up eating very highly acidic food. Our pallets are so acidic, there's yogurt and pickles and sour things in everything that we eat. We believe in balance in every bite and every dish. And so I have a really highly acidic palette. So anytime I eat a meal that's not acidic, I'm very aware of it. And so Thanksgiving for me, like my first Thanksgiving, when I was invited to a friend's house in college to her friend's family's house, I was kind of in shock.

Hrishi: And what was that cranberry sauce? Was that a homemade one or was it from the can?

Samin: I'm pretty sure it was homemade. Her family was really avid home cooks. I got to experience a lot of really interesting things that I will never forget. And I'm still obsessed with, like there was ambrosia salad. Something that is called a salad but has marshmallows in it. Yes. Which was very exciting to me.

Hrishi: Oh in that case, I am so excited to play you this next question. I can't believe you brought up ambrosia salad spontaneously. But here is a question we got from Julio.

Julio: I'm hoping you can help me out with this issue. My husband loves that sweet potato side that is topped with marshmallows and I think it is the grossest effing thing ever. Like marshmallows are candy. It's just, no. Is there a spin on this dish that does not involve marshmallows, that you would suggest, that would be a good replacement for that because ain't no way I'm cooking that in my kitchen this year. Thanks for the insight. And for this fabulous podcast.

Hrishi: I'm 100% with Julio. What is that?

Samin: I mean, it is a wild that that's considered a vegetable.

Hrishi: I had never even heard of this dish until we got this question then I looked, I was like, this is just some weird thing that his husband, I don't

know, some regional thing. And I looked and there are apparently, this is the real thing. Sweet potatoes with marshmallows.

Samin: Oh my God, it's way a real thing. Wait, Hrishi, please tell me that you experienced, I think it was now like four or five years ago. The highly controversial state by state map of the defining dishes of Thanksgiving that was published by the New York Times a few years ago

Hrishi: No, I don't remember that.

Samin: The New York Times quote unquote researched what was the most popular side dish in each state. And then published this nation wide map of the defining side dish per state.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: And so, many states were deeply offended.

Hrishi: By how they were represented?

Samin: By how they were represented.

Hrishi: Oh my gosh.

Samin: There were a lot of marshmallow ones. There are a lot of jello ones. One of the states got a grape salad. Minnesota was like, "You have done us wrong."

Hrishi: I liked the idea that the state wrote in-

Samin: Experiencing this on the internet was amazing.

Hrishi: So, sweet potato marshmallows. Why do you have to have marshmallows in there? I love sweet potatoes but sweet is already in the name.

Samin: It's already sweet.

Hrishi: I feel like you can go as far as adding maple syrup

Samin: Or brown sugar. I really love it when sweet potatoes are caramelized and really brown on the outside, but still have soft, delicious, creamy texture on the inside, which means on a typical my once a week way that I cook

them, I either halve them and just cook them cut side down, or I cut them into coins that are maybe three quarters of an inch or an inch thick. And then I flip them about halfway through cooking. So they get browned on both sides. But that way I have a nice thick piece that I can bite into. So I would suggest doing that either halving them or cutting them into really nice thick coins. And one of the fats that I really think pairs really nicely with sweet potatoes is coconut oil. I really love the taste of coconut oil with root vegetables. I just think there's a natural sort of sweetness to coconut oil that is so delicious with root vegetables. And then if I wanted to introduce that brown sugary thing, to appease my husband, who doesn't exist. I would probably just mix some brown sugar and butter and sprinkle that on top. The other thing that would be fun to do. I've done this before. This might be so interesting and special that he forgets there is no marshmallows. You could make Hasselback sweet potatoes. Do you know what those are, Hrishi?

Hrishi: Is it named after you? Like whenever I tried to get you to do this podcast and you give me a hassle, back?

Samin: That's exactly it. No, they're so beautiful. They're like little potato porcupines. They're like little potato fans. They're potato fans.

Hrishi: I'm a potato fan.

Samin: What you do and the way you make them is really... I love how you make them. So you put your sweet potato down on your cutting board. You peeled sweet potato down on your cutting board and you take two pencils or two chopsticks and you put one in front and one behind it. So that it doesn't roll around on your cutting board. And then you use a knife cutting across the width as if you were going to cut it into coins, but the pencils or the chopsticks do is they keep you from cutting all the way down. So really all you're doing is you're scoring the potato

Hrishi: You're cutting it into slices, but only 90% of the way.

Samin: Exactly, you're cutting it into a fan. So the, pencils keep you from going all the way through. Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: You know, and I would cut them into coins that are maybe quarter inch thick.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: So at the end you can, you should be able to hold it up and it's a fan that's held together. It's a sweet potato, cut into a fan of coins that's held together.

Hrishi: Okay.

Samin: And then you do that with as many sweet potatoes will fit into your dish. And then you put them all in your dish. And now in every single nook and cranny in between each coin slice, you can fit all sorts of deliciousness. You can fit butter and brown sugar. So if you want-

Hrishi: Like a pad of butter in between each one of those nooks?

Samin: Yes! So if you want, you can make a brown, sugary butter, or a maple syrupy butter, or spiced butter, or like a sagey maple syrupy butter, or whatever combination of deliciousness that you want. And stick little pieces of that in between or pour, you can melt it and pour that in between, and now you have this beautiful thing that you can roast. And so it will be so dramatic once it comes out of the oven. And because they're sliced, you get both things, you get both the, texture of chips and the bottom part is the texture of that soft chewy, gooey piece of a whole roasted sweet potato. So you, you get the double experience out of the single sweet potato,

Hrishi: That sounds great. I mean, that's, that's a few different ways to make a sweet potato and Juio, I hope one of those pleases your guy.

Samin: I really hope so. Otherwise, I mean, unpleasable.

Hrishi: Okay. With that, I'm going to play you this question from Katie

Katie: Hey, Hrishi, Samin. My name is Katie. And for obvious reasons, I'm skipping the big family Thanksgiving this year, but I'm kind of excited about it because, I'm a vegetarian and I get to make my own vegetarian Thanksgiving this year, with my roommate. Cause normally I'm resigned to all of the various things, Thanksgiving sides that are kind of all the same texture, same blended ingredients. And so I was wondering you guys had any ideas for a vegetarian main that I could make from like a little small Thanksgiving this year? I'm down for non traditional, obviously

no turkey. Probably not tofurky, so I'm not into that, yeah. I'm down to hear if you had any ideas. Thanks guys.

Hrishi: All right. I have an idea

Samin: I have an idea too, but I'm going to let you go first as our resident Veggie.

Hrishi: I have an idea that the last question sort of made me think of, but I certainly wouldn't know how to make it.

Samin: Okay. You say the idea and I'll figure how to make it.

Hrishi: Okay. Thinking about sort of the flavors of Thanksgiving and what would be like a special thing to cook and really delicious to eat. What would you think about a pumpkin ravioli?

Samin: Oh I love this idea.

Hrishi: With sage and brown butter sauce.

Samin: I love this idea, if you really want to go all out, you could make it into a lasagna too. Make like a roasted squash lasagna with, yeah, all of those flavors and add like a ricotta layer. I think that's a great idea. Absolutely. And we can link to all the different, parts of both the lasagna and the pasta. I think that's a fantastic idea.

Hrishi: I've definitely never had pumpkin or squash in a lasagna form.

Samin: Oh yeah. It's one of my favorite ones. I mean, I've made it both where I cook the squash and leave it in pieces, but I actually prefer pureeing. I really like it where everything in that lasagna or in the case of ravioli where everything is really soft and it's just this like velvet, upon velvet, upon velvet and all of these different flavors. And the pumpkin has brown butter in it, and there's a ricotta layer and there's a bechamel layer and there's a sageiness. And one of the secret ingredients I like to put in it, is there's a cookie in, Northern Israel, Italy called amaretti cookies, so that's a traditional sort of ingredient often in pumpkin ravioli's. And so I'll sprinkle a little bit of like secret amaretti crumbs in there. And that adds a little like surprise flavor. And you know, obviously a ton of Parmesan cheese, it's super rich, it's super decadent. That's, it's a thing I love

making. So, I think that's a great idea, Hrishi, and I think it would be really fun and really satisfying and really gratifying.

Hrishi: Awesome.

Samin: Yeah, I'm totally all for that.

Hrishi: Okay. What's your idea?

Samin: My idea comes from my friend, Aaron. He made it for his partner and his best friend maybe now 10 years ago. And it's always been like one of my favorite veggie mains at Thanksgiving. He took a small, a smallish squash, like a kubocho. And I think it's important for this squash to be a really flavorful squash. It's maybe not a big pumpkin, but get a nice sort of heritage flavorful squash. A kuri is another variety that I really liked. K U R I, but Kubocho's are really nice and sort of core it out, like you're going to make a jack-o'-lantern and save the top, take the seeds out. And now you have this beautiful squash that you can stuff with all sorts of beautiful things. Basically he stuffed the squash, like as if it was going to be a turkey that he was going to stuff with stuffing. So he made a really flavorful stuffing out of bread and cheese and vegetables, like kale and onions and all sorts of other deliciousness and herbs and maybe prunes that he soaked in white wine. And I don't even remember. He just made like a super flavorful stuffing and then he stuffed the squash and made a roasted squash. And so then everybody got a slice of big, beautiful roasted squash and stuffing. And he, and he soaked to the stuffing with like a really rich veggie stock so that it was really flavorful and moist. It didn't come out dry, you know. And then I think he kept as he was roasting the squash, he just kept like basting it over and over again with like butter and olive oil. It got all beautiful and brown. And it was one of those things where at the table, you never felt like you were not getting something, you just felt so satisfied. And it was this like really beautiful, big, glorious thing.

Hrishi: That sounds, so cool.

Samin: Mhh-hmm (affirmative).

Hrishi: Okay. Now that we're, in the world of, main dishes, here's a question from Casey.

Casey: So my partner and I have never cooked a turkey or the whole meal before. Usually we just like bring the side to a bigger gathering, but this year we'll be all in this together, by staying apart or something else like that, but we feel pretty good about our cooking skills. We're just not sure how to time at all. What can be prepped ahead? And how far can you prep it without losing quality of taste and texture and all that? Can we cook something with the same time and the turkey, because all the 90's sitcoms lead me to believe that sucker's going to be in there for a while. And our oven is being a jerk lately, so whenever we heat it to above 300, we have to give it a chance to air out and sit with the door open for a minute. And then we get the heat back up. And it's usually fine after that.

Samin: Oh yikes.

Casey: But what if this happens while we're cooking turkey since it's going to be awhile? Should we just order from Bob Evans? Please help. Thank you!

Samin: Yes! Oh my gosh. Casey. I'm so grateful for this question, because I don't know how many years ago, but many years ago I spent an absurd amount of time writing many blog posts. With a week long plan of how to plan all of your time for Thanksgiving. I will dig up those blog posts. I mean, and that was for a person who was going to go really over the top and make every single thing from scratch. But really the way you figure this out is you work backwards from the moment you want to sit down at the table and then you just work backwards from there. And so you figure out, okay, how much time does it take to make this thing and oh that thing needs to be in the oven for this long. And this thing needs to be in the oven for this long, but there can only be one of those things in the oven at a time. So how do I juggle them? So you just have to sort of make a map of your kitchen and of your time and what you want to have. And that's how you create your schedule. So, What we'll do is we're going to dig up those blog posts and link to them. And then you're going to like, spend a little bit of time, maybe the Sunday before Thanksgiving making your plan. Any time I enter a kitchen, I think about what's the ultimate sort of constraint. And for Thanksgiving, the ultimate constraint for most people is oven space. And because most dishes on the Thanksgiving table need to spend at least some time in the oven. You know like pie, turkey, stuffing, casseroles, all those sweet potatoes, all

those things have to get roasted and toasted and braised and blah blah blah.

Hrishi: And at different heats.

Samin: Yeah, and at different heats, and different times, and yet somehow you want everything to be hot at the same time.

Hrishi: Yeah

Samin: And you're like, how am I going to do this and keep this hot? And this needs to be rested and this and this and this. And trying to write a menu that, is going to be helpful, trying to choose dishes that will succeed at room temperature is going to be helpful.

Hrishi: Like what?

Samin: One of the things I really love to serve I'll roast say brussels sprouts and butternut squash or other squash in advance, and then toss it with vinegar and sugar and hot chilies in a sauce called agrodolce, just a dressing. And then it's sort of like a marinated room-temperature roast vegetable salad. Or for example, a pie. Pie is something I would get out of the way first thing in the morning on Thursday. But we have not yet addressed the other scary part of your question, which is that your oven freaks out when it gets over 300 degrees, and should you just go to Bob Evans? So I would say, can you call an oven repair person? Because I am worried this is an oven heavy day, an oven heavy week and the fact that your oven is already finicky is concerning to me. If you can get your oven repaired, that would be helpful. Otherwise, I might say, "Yes, you should probably order the turkey part of your meal from Bob Evans, or somebody else, and then maybe make the rest of it yourself so that you can relieve yourself from the stress of the meat." Because as Hrishi pointed out, you do want to make sure that the meat is cooked properly and that can be a pretty stressful part of the cooking.

Hrishi: Yeah. Samin, you have no idea how many stupid things come into my head that I never actually say to you. Believe it or not, you are spared so many-

Samin: I don't believe it.

Hrishi: It's true.

Samin: I don't believe it.

Hrishi: It's true. For example, just now I was thinking about how we would say to Casey that, "Yeah, making sure you're able to cook everything is of an essential nature."

Samin: Oh, no. But then you still found a way to say it. So guess what?

Hrishi: I'm saying I didn't say it.

Samin: No, but you did say it.

Hrishi: But I'm not taking any credit for it because it's so bad.

Samin: No, but you just said it.

Hrishi: As an example of the kind of thing I don't say to you.

Samin: But you just said it to me.

Hrishi: Okay. Moving on.

Samin: Oh, Casey. Casey, I wish you the best of luck. You're going to be fine.

Hrishi: Now that we're talking turkey-

Rachel: It's Rachel.

Siri: And Siri.

Rachel: And we were wondering if you had any tips for adapting Samin's buttermilk chicken recipe for a turkey. Thanks.

Siri: Bye.

Hrishi: Bye.

Samin: Bye. What an amazing question. Perfectly timed. Because today in the New York Times, my buttermilk turkey recipe is being published. And so we're actually publishing three different variations. There is this whole spatchcocked turkey. There's a breast for people who are not going to gather in a large group and also we're republishing the original chicken. So that hopefully there's a version for everyone.

Hrishi: And could you just explain to folks, just a quick reminder if they're not familiar with this famous recipe of yours, what the deal is?

Samin: Yeah. You take a chicken, you put it in like a gallon size zipper, plastic bag, you dump two cups of buttermilk on it and put some salt in there and let it sit overnight. And then you take the chicken out, scrape off as much buttermilk as you can and roast it in the oven.

Hrishi: Do you have to shake it up once you put it in the bag?

Samin: Yeah, you kind of just like move it around. The buttermilk and the salt turn into this really beautiful brine and because buttermilk has natural sugars and acids in it and also water, it acts like an incredible brine that both tenderizes the meat, the sugars help create this beautiful golden brown skin. And this is not something I invented by any means, I came to it because I was trying to adapt the yogurt marinated chicken that I saw my mom making for Persian kebabs, but yogurt was too expensive in the restaurant where I worked to use. So I started, I was like, "Oh, maybe it would work with buttermilk for our..." Because we had a beautiful wood-fired spit and I loved spit-roasting chicken. And then as soon as I started doing it with buttermilk, I remembered, "Oh gosh, in the American South, like grandmas have been doing this for hundreds of years." Where they marinate their chicken overnight in buttermilk before deep-frying it.

Hrishi: Yeah, and so this would work for turkey too.

Samin: People for the last few years have been asking me, "Will it work for a turkey?" And I was really hesitant to just say yes because I wasn't sure if the skin would get too dark or what the cooking time would be, if it would be different, or if the salt amount was right. So I spent a few, I have been cooking a lot of turkey over the last few months, to get the marinating right and the salt amount right. And I decided to spatchcock it, which means to cut out the backbone, which dramatically cuts down the cooking time, which I think will be a wonderful gift to everyone this holiday. And it results in a really beautiful bird with just an incredibly lacquered skin. It's so simple. And unlike other brined birds, what it means is because you cut out that bone, it kind of folds in half and you just slip it into a two-gallon plastic bag and it takes up way less room in the fridge. And you don't have to make this complicated brine, you just

put buttermilk and salt on the turkey, you leave it in the fridge for two days, pull it out, bring it to room temperature, roast it until it's done, and call it a day. And it's so tender and juicy. It's so tasty and yeah, the recipe is online and in print today.

Hrishi: Here's a question for you, as I imagine you've had to deal with this later, since turkey leftovers are such a big part of the post-Thanksgiving eating.

Samin: Honestly, the entire reason I care about turkey is for the leftovers.

Hrishi: And how does the buttermilk turkey translate to leftovers?

Samin: Oh, the best. So good. To me better because I feel like buttermilk leads to juicier turkey, which leads to juicier leftovers.

Hrishi: I can imagine that because I know as you were talking about the yogurt marinated Iranian chicken, of course, that made me think of the same kind of thing in Indian cooking and that's a food that tastes great as a leftover.

Samin: So tasty.

Hrishi: What size turkey did you develop this recipe for?

Samin: I tested this one with several different size turkeys from eight to 14 pounds. But if you end up using a turkey that's larger, it will absolutely work. You just have to adjust the cooking time to make sure you get to the appropriate temperature, which is 150 degrees in the breast and 165 degrees in the leg. And if you notice that the skin is getting too dark, you can just cover it with a piece of foil until it gets to the right temperature.

Hrishi: An eight-pound Turkey though is still a lot of Turkey.

Samin: It is. And usually, the calculation for when you're shopping is you buy a pound per person.

Hrishi: Well, that leads me to this question from Polly. And it's a sentiment that we got from a lot of listeners who wrote in to us.

Polly: Like many people this year I will not be traveling home to visit family for Thanksgiving. Any advice on how to downsize the Thanksgiving meal, but still make it special? Thanks.

Hrishi: So, for example, this special turkey recipe that you've made, eight pounds of turkey if you're serving eight people, but you're just by yourself, how do you make this work and still get to have that kind of deliciousness? Well, you said that you did a version of the recipe with just turkey breast.

Samin: Yeah. So I made a version that's just with the breast, which honestly, if breast is not for you, you could also just buy the leg and brine the leg. At the grocery store where I shop, year-round you can buy just the breast or the leg, like in the meat case, you don't even have to go to the butcher counter and ask the butcher to cut it up for you. I suspect that at most grocery stores that have a butcher counter this year, they will happily be carving turkeys into smaller pieces and into halves and into individual parts for people. Because I think a lot of people will be wanting just parts.

Hrishi: Yeah.

Samin: I think you can go in on meals with neighbors and as far as I understand it and we had Dr. Uncle Sumesh Hirway, Ph.D. in an earlier episode to tell us about some of the science. But as long as you're very careful, it's really the mucus membranes that are how we pass COVID from one another. And so food and food containers, as long as they're kept dry and clean, is not a way to transmit COVID from person to person.

Hrishi: Right.

Samin: So a cooked turkey, or even a raw Turkey, if neighbors were to buy and split up turkey, I think that's one way to be able to sort of get those flavors and get those tastes. And also, I think, it's a tough year. It's a different year. This is going to be a year that we look back on at the end of our lives and remember always as just a year that was different. And it's okay if this meal is different. I don't think anybody's meal is going to look normal.

Hrishi: Yeah. The whole year has an asterisk, so your Thanksgiving can too.

Samin: Yeah. And so if you don't have turkey or you don't have everything, it's okay. Honestly, I have to say I prefer chicken anyway. And frankly my favorite things on the table have nothing to do with meat.

Hrishi: Yeah, I just want stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy.

Samin: I mean, I feel like you're eating a pretty butter-heavy meal, buddy.

Hrishi: I am, exactly.

Samin: You're like a little stick of butter. You're like a stick of butter with a goatee. Oh my God. Can someone carve Hrishi out of butter, please?

Hrishi: And this brings us to dessert.

Samin: Already. I don't even have a stomach ache.

Hrishi: We already covered Turkey. And so I think this is a perfect time to take a little break. And then when we come back, let's get into some pie talk with our friend Demi Adejuyigbe .

Samin: Oh yeah.

Hrishi: So joining us now is comedian, director, screenwriter, Demi Adejuyigbe. He writes for the new Amber Ruffin Show, he was a co-host of the podcasts, Punch Up the Jam and Gilmore Guys.

Samin: He also tried to kill me.

Hrishi: I don't think you can just drop that in. It was a game.

Samin: I think he did kill me actually.

Hrishi: In a game.

Samin: In a game.

Hrishi: Online. On Zoom.

Samin: He makes hilarious videos and songs. And as it turns out, baked goods.

Hrishi: Well, the baked goods aren't hilarious, but they probably are delicious.

Samin: I don't know. Maybe they're hilarious. Let's see.

Hrishi: Okay, let's find out. Hey Demi, thank you so much for joining us.

Demi: Thank you for having me.

Hrishi: I have been watching on Instagram as, this entire quarantine period, you have been baking so many delicious-looking things.

Demi: Yes

Hrishi: As an aside, I have not gotten to eat any of them, but they look delicious.

Demi: I was supposed to bring Hrishi four apple turnovers that I made last night, and then work got away from me and I didn't have time. I was very excited for him to have been able to have said he'd tasted them by the time we recorded this, but I have to take them over afterwards.

Samin: I've been supposed to send Demi a banana bread since February.

Hrishi: Demi?

Samin: I mean, I've been supposed to send ... Oh, and probably Demi, too.

Hrishi: Wow.

Demi: I was like, "Whoa, I didn't know about this."

Hrishi: Like, Demi gets one before me?

Demi: I'll take it.

Samin: Yeah. Well, Demi, I'm going to send you a banana bread tomorrow, but I've been supposed to send-

Demi: Great.

Samin: ... Hrishi a banana bread since February, still have not. So don't worry. You've got at least six to eight months.

Hrishi: Yep. She was supposed to buy me some dark chocolate Almond Joys. Never got those.

Demi: He's keeping a list.

Hrishi: Oh, yeah.

Samin: Oh, yeah. There's a long list.

Demi: Oh, wow.

Hrishi: Okay. I've been to your apartment, Demi, for parties and lots of ... There have often been great snacks. Sometimes I've brought cookies. But I didn't realize that you are a baker yourself. Is that something that's been new since quarantine?

Demi: Yeah. That's definitely something that really started in quarantine. Just before quarantine, friends would come over and we'd make cookies. My roommate, Gabe, would always insist that we make them spicy and just throw some cayenne in there. So we started experimenting with cookie recipes and whatnot. Then I was like, "Well, I'd like to bake other things," and it kind of spiraled and spiraled. Now, it's just like I have a pressed collection of loose pages from a notebook that are just different recipes. It starts with cookies, and then it gets to pumpkin pie entirely from scratch.

Samin: When you decide you want to make pumpkin pie, where do you get the recipe from?

Demi: Just googling "_____ recipe" and being like, "This one works. Let's go."

Samin: You just look one up and you just commit and you go with it?

Demi: There is no trial and error. There's no checking for quality. I'm like, "This looks good." Sometimes, I'll end up on one of those baking blogs where they tell a long story and have a lot of photographs, and I'll be like, "Okay, we go to the bottom," and I look at it. I don't need to-

Samin: You're like, "I don't care about this story."

Demi: Exactly. I'm like, "I don't even need to hear about" ... It'll be like, "You know, what's really best for this is this brand of thing." I'm like, "If it's good, it'll work, let's go."

Hrishi: Well, this pumpkin pie is specifically why we wanted to talk to you for this episode, our first of two Thanksgiving episodes. What made you decide you wanted to make pumpkin pie?

Demi: My friends and I decided we wanted to watch *Over the Garden Wall*, and my friend, Celia, it's her sort of holiday, fall tradition. It's like, "Oh, it's officially fall now that we've watched *Over the Garden Wall*." And she offhandedly mentioned, "Oh, I wish we could have pumpkin pie." As soon

as anyone mentions any baked good now, I'm just like, "Could I make it? Could I make it? Yeah, I can make it." I had a graham cracker pie crust, but then I was also like, "Well, you know what? I've never made a pie before, and I've also never made a pie crust before, and I hear that that's a whole thing unto itself." So I was like, "Well, maybe I'll make that from scratch." Then I was like, "Okay, and I can get the pumpkin pie filling," and then I was like, "Well, no, can I make the pumpkin filling from scratch, too?" So I looked up a recipe and they were like, "Yeah, just get a pumpkin and cut it in half and do all this stuff," and I was like, "Oh, okay. This is a whole thing. All right. I'm in."

Hrishi: Wow.

Samin: How many days did it take you?

Demi: Oh, just the one.

Samin: Wow. You did the whole thing in one day with a pumpkin?

Demi: I did it while we were watching. I was just like, "I'm in my kitchen. I got the screen over here and the TV's in front of me and I'll just make the pie and not disturb anyone." It was really fun.

Samin: Wow.

Hrishi: How did it turn out?

Demi: I think it turned out great.

Hrishi: And how do you feel about pumpkin pie otherwise? Is that a food that you have a lot of attachment to?

Demi: Not really. I actually don't but I don't hate it." And eating this one, I felt the same way, of being like, "Ah, it's not" ... It's pumpkin pie, for sure. Other people seemed to like it. I delivered leftovers to friends, and they were like, "This is good." So I'm like, "Okay, I'm confident that I did it right."

Samin: Can we talk about the crust?

Hrishi: Yes.

Samin: Okay. Okay, first of all, what was the fat in the crust? Was it all butter, or was there other stuff in it?

Demi: It was butter. I saw a recipe that I could've used shortening for. I read something about the butter just tasting better, and it's like, "Well, I've got both so I'll just--"

Samin: It does taste better.

Demi: ... All right. Well, there we go."

Samin: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You seem like you're the perfect level of baking experience to enter the pie-making because it sounds like you've been baking and have a comfort with baking, yet you're not so much of a geek and so in it that you haven't built a fear. Because, for me, I had built a real fear of pie crust because I had heard all of this lore. There's a lot of lore around pie crust. If you add too much water, if you overwork it, it'll get tough, it'll get too chewy. And so, to me, you had a beautiful amount of blissful ignorance, and so that probably helped you because you didn't enter it fearfully. You just were like, "Yeah, I wanted the butter, the butter tasted good,

Hrishi: Welcome to Home Cooking where my co-host Samin calls our guests ignorant in a nice way.

Demi: Yeah. I love to be called ignorant in a nice way for once. I do feel like, with baking, it is this thing where I'm like, "Hey, someone wrote the recipe, I'll just follow the recipe." It's like there's no fear to it for me. I was intimidated by pastries for a while, and then I tried making an apple turnover, and I was like, "Oh, this turned out good. So I'll just keep going."

Hrishi: I feel like the way you're describing your approach to making baked goods and making this pie, it feels like how I think of the way you approach all the things you make, like music and videos and things like that.

Demi: Good ignorance?

Hrishi: The difficulty level. Just, no, that you're not intimidated by the difficulty level, but, actually, you get excited by the challenge of doing something you've never done before.

Demi: Yeah.

Hrishi: Whereas other people might be like, "Oh, well, I can't do that. That's"-

Samin: Well, that's me, is I'm like, "Let me mire myself in all of the nuances and details and overwhelm myself with how difficult this thing could possibly be." And then I will not even attempt it for 22 years until I've learned every possible thing. That's my thing, whereas you have a much wiser, though it sounds like an insult, it is actually a compliment, okay? Let me just say.

Hrishi: Demi, I love how much of your baking is motivated by your friends.

Demi: I feel like one of the reasons I've gotten so into baking through quarantine is that it is a very nice way to make a thing that is not for me and then just deliver it to a friend as just like a, "Here's a fun thing for me to do." I made baked goods for my coworkers just as a, "Oh, I'm so excited to be working with you," and I'm going to deliver it to them tonight also.

Hrishi: Your coworkers on the Amber Ruffin show?

Demi: Yes.

Hrishi: Nice.

Samin: That's so nice.

Demi: This is a nice way for me to have a reason to deliver things. Also, it's just like every so often I'll post the things on Instagram and someone will just be like, "Oh my God, what is this," and I'll start talking with them and I'll be like, "Let me bake you something." I'm just like, "Pick a thing," because then it's just a fun thing for me to get to learn how to bake more things by taking requests from those friends and being like, "Oh, well I would never eat oatmeal raisin cookies, but I'd love to make them for you to eat."

Hrishi: Wow. Do you have a sense maybe or a list of the number of people who've gotten baked goods from you before me?

Demi: I do. I want to say it's in the hundreds now, but it could be the two hundreds. I don't know. I'm going alphabetical, Hrishi.

Hrishi: You're still on the Gs.

Demi: Yeah. I have a lot of G friends. I don't know how it happened.

Hrishi: Oh, I understand why you have a lot of G friends.

Demi: Why?

Hrishi: They all want you to be their B friend.

Demi: Oh, boy. I'm leaving.

Samin: I can't believe it took us 17 minutes to get here.

Hrishi: To get Demi to want to leave. I know. He stayed for you calling him ignorant, but, B friend G friend...

Demi: Yeah, that crossed the line.

Hrishi: Yeah. Okay, so your pumpkin pie ambivalence aside, what's the thing that you've loved the most that you've made?

Samin: Yeah, what's your favorite baked success?

Demi: I really love the apple turnovers I've been making. I think the thing I've made the most is these lemon cakes that every so often I'll ... There was a day when I just was bored and had so many lemons and I was like, "All right, I'm just going to make seven lemon cakes." Then I delivered them to friends, and people seemed to really like them, so I like making those.

Samin: Those were all the B friends, Hrishi.

Demi: Oh, yeah. That was ... Yeah.

Samin: That was the Bs.

Hrishi: For the apple turnovers, do you make the pastry dough yourself?

Demi: I have not. That was partially because I was just afraid of pastry stuff.

Hrishi: Yeah, yes.

Demi: But after making this pie and it turning out fine, I'm like, "Well, next time I make it, I definitely want to just make the sheets myself."

Samin: You totally should. And a really nice trick, you should look for a recipe for cream cheese pastry because cream cheese doughs are really quite easy to make and they come together really well and they have a really nice texture and that's a really sort of a common dough for a turnover.

Demi: I'll try it out. The only thing I've made with cream cheese so far, I made these orange cream cheese glazed cinnamon rolls, mostly off of a dare.

Samin: Do you have any interest in baking cookbooks, or is it really like you just are so into this process of the Google and the notebook?

Demi: I like baking cookbooks, but I've realized this thing. So I made sour cream and onion biscuits for the first time the other day.

Samin: Mm.

Hrishi: Oh, yeah. I saw those on your Instagram, too, and they looked amazing.

Demi: Interesting. You didn't heart eyes those. I would've sent you some.

Hrishi: Well, because I got the message.

Demi: Hrishi, all you had to do was do one more, and I would have been like, "Well, I'll bring you some."

Hrishi: If you want to make me some of those biscuits, that would be an amazing Thanksgiving.

Demi: Okay. You got it. I'll deliver these turnovers today, and then I'll deliver some biscuits to you before Thanksgiving.

Hrishi: This is incredible.

Demi: You got it. All you got to do is ask.

Hrishi: Everybody, follow Demi on Instagram. Send him your wishlist.

Samin: Send him the heart eyes.

Demi: Uh, uh, uh... So I made those, and it was off of this recipe on Bon Appetit. It was the first time I had used a recipe that was specific and not

just someone submitting a recipe somewhere. I realized that it was like, "Oh, okay, this is made with such attention to how you have to make it," and I was like, "Oh, I might actually screw this up. I think I'm not as confident here." So I was just enjoying being like, "If I google a thing, what will pop up," but then I also do want to get good enough that I'm confident following an expert's recipes.

Samin: I don't want to project or impose, but I am inspired to send you a big stack of cookbooks.

Demi: Please. I will bake you anything from those cookbooks. And then, Hrishi, I'll get to you after I do this.

Hrishi: This was so great. Thank you so much for doing it.

Samin: Thank you so much.

Demi: Thank you for having me.

Samin: We're going to promote your baking career. Cookbook deal coming soon.

Demi: Yay. It'll be 12 recipes, all from Google.

Samin: You can follow Demi on Twitter and Instagram @electrolemon. If you're really nice and send emojis at his baked goods, he may or may not decide to make some for you.

Hrishi: An update, by the way, he dropped off my apple turnovers and I already ate one and it was delicious.

Samin: Crap. Now I really do have to send that banana bread.

Hrishi: You definitely do. Wow. You really do.

Samin: And that's it for this episode.

Hrishi: Thanks so much for listening.

Samin: We make this podcast with the help of Margaret Miller, Zach McNees, Gary Lee, and Casey Deal. And Mamie Rheingold makes our artwork.

Hrishi: We're a proud member of Radiotopia, a collective of fiercely independent podcasts. You can learn more about all of the Radiotopia shows at radiotopia.fm.

Samin: Let us know if you have any cooking-related questions, just record a voice memo and send it to us at alittlehomecooking@gmail.com.

Hrishi: If you hear this episode the day that it comes out and you have Thanksgiving questions, we might still be able to answer them. Otherwise, I don't know. Send us your questions for the things you make in December.

Samin: Holiday cookie box.

Hrishi: In the meantime, our website is homecooking.show, and you can find all of the recipes and transcripts for all of our episodes there.

Samin: You can follow me on Twitter and Instagram @ciaosamin.

Hrishi: And I'm @hrishihirway.

Samin: Stay healthy, eat well, and take care of each other.

Hrishi: We'll be back with more Thanksgiving in part two of our two-part series from episode... You know what I'm saying. We'll be back in two weeks.

Samin: Until then, I'm Samin.

Hrishi: And I'm Hrishi.

Samin: And we'll be home cooking.