

# Inside Trader Joe's Podcast Transcript — Episode 96: Recipes for Thanksgiving and Beyond

*[Light upbeat music begins.]*

Tara: Happy holidays, Matt.

Matt: And likewise to you, Tara. It's hard to believe Thanksgiving is here already.

Tara: Are you ready for the holiday rush?

Matt: If you mean for shopping (tapes starts to speed up and gets faster and faster) and parties and travel and decorating and hosting and some school events, sending cards, year-end deadlines...(tape slows to a stop)

Tara: You left out cooking and baking.

*[Music transition.]*

Matt: Well, on purpose, because those are easy thanks to the recipes at [traderjoes.com](https://traderjoes.com).

Tara: Aha. Lucky for us, Kathleen is here to share three of her favorites.

Kathleen: Yes, I am.

Matt: Okay, but Kathleen, just three. We don't have time for more. You heard how busy I'm going to be.

Kathleen: Can I say it?

Tara: Sure.

Kathleen: Let's go *Inside Trader Joe's*.

*[Theme music begins with two bells at a neighborhood Trader Joe's.]*

Tara: I'm Tara Miller, director of words and phrases and clauses.

Matt: And I'm Matt Sloan, the culture and innovation guy at Trader Joe's.

Kathleen: And I'm Kathleen. I have a great job at Trader Joe's that includes testing and editing the recipes for our website.

Tara: Somebody's got to do it.

Matt: All right, so let's count down your top three personal favorite recipes for the holidays in 2025. We'll start with number three.

*[Theme music ends.]*

Kathleen: Now I have to rank them?

Matt: Well, no, not really, but just pretend.

Tara: What's number three?

*[Fast upbeat music begins.]*

Kathleen: The no-oven app for the holidays, the Blue Cheese-Stuffed Dates.

Tara: Everybody needs a no-bake, no-cook, no-muss, no-fuss app, and I'm very excited that you've brought us one.

Matt: But does no-bake mean no-muss or no-fuss?

Tara: I think in this case, it really does. This is a very low, maybe not no-muss, no-fuss, but low-muss, low-fuss.

Kathleen: You are turning on the stove, but you're not doing much else than that. If you're hosting a holiday, you have a turkey in the oven, you don't have time to be taking other things in and out. Or you're a guest and you're not going to show up on time, and you can't be asking your host to put something in the oven for 45 minutes while everybody's starving. This, you can prepare at home and just bring and serve, and everybody will be happy.

Tara: Okay, so Blue Cheese-Stuffed Dates. Sounds pretty straightforward.

Kathleen: Very customizable as well. I know someone's like, "Oh, I don't like blue cheese." You can sub out the blue cheese for goat cheese or for brie or Unexpected Cheddar Spread. You can kind of customize it to your taste. You just need something creamy enough to stuff into a date.

Tara: Tell us how this works.

*[Music transition.]*

Kathleen: Slice open your dates. Easy. If there's a pit in them, you remove the pit. Also easy. Then you add the cheese, whatever cheese you want, this case blue cheese. The Cambozola is a great choice. It's creamy. It's delicate. You get a little funk. It goes really well with the sweetness of the dates.

Tara: Okay.

Kathleen: And now I'm asking you to do one little, teeny, tiny thing. On the stovetop, little saucepan, a little butter, brown butter. Add some sage leaves. You already have the sage in your fridge. You're using it for your turkey or for your stuffing. Just get them a little crispy, and that will be the garnish for the appetizer.

Matt: Nice.

Tara: Okay. And that's it. A whole shebang.

Kathleen: Serve and enjoy.

Tara: You could do it even without the sage leaves, right?

Kathleen: I'm being extra here, but absolutely.

Matt: You also have that little handful of sage kicking around.

Tara: Yeah. Because it's the holidays.

Matt: Why have it go to waste? So stuffing these dates, they're sliced in half. Are you having some kind of trick to get the cheese in there? Is it just using a cheese spreader? Is it a pastry bag? What are we doing?

Kathleen: It depends on the level of energy you want to exert. Dates already have this little pocket where the pit is, so that's kind of your pocket already.

*[Music transition.]*

Tara: So you're not saying slice them all the way open in half. Slice the top of the date so you can get the pit out, right?

Matt: I like to vote for using pitted dates. What if we did that?

Kathleen: Done.

Tara: But so if you use pitted dates, you still have to slice it a little bit so that you can stuff the cheese in it.

Kathleen: Correct.

Tara: But you're not suggesting, or maybe you are, that we slice the dates entirely in half and then you have two halves, and you top it with the cheese. You're saying cut it open a little bit and stuff the cheese into the little pocket.

Kathleen: How many people do you need to feed?

Tara: Oh, I guess that's true. Okay.

Kathleen: The easier route would be a quick little slice, so you have enough room to stuff the cheese in. But if you're feeding a ton of people, just slice them in half and double your yield easily.

Tara: Okay, so that's our no-bake app. What's next on our recipe agenda for today?

*[Music transition.]*

Kathleen: A twist on a classic. There's a lot of casseroles for Thanksgiving. There's a lot of casseroles on your holiday table. This one is taking a slightly less-soft approach to a green bean casserole.

Tara: Okay.

Kathleen: Instead of baking in the oven with a creamy sauce, this is blistered on the stovetop in a really hot pan and served with our sweet chili sauce.

Tara: Oooh.

Kathleen: So textures abound. You have the just-cooked green beans, you have this glazy sweet chili sauce, aromatics from onions and garlic, and then finish with something crispy. Maybe some almonds, maybe some fried onion pieces, maybe our new fried shallots, just to give it a little extra crunch.

Matt: I'm a huge fan of these frozen green beans, and they're very fine, they're very thin, and they're tender. On a screamingly hot pan, are you throwing frozen beans in there? Are you letting them thaw out?

Kathleen: You add just a little oil to the pan and then you put them in from frozen. So this is just as good for a holiday meal as it is for a weeknight. If you already have a bag of green beans in your freezer, you're pretty good to go.

Matt: Mm-hmm.

Tara: I like the idea of having something that is, I wouldn't say spicy, because that sweet chili sauce is much more sweet than it is spicy, but it has an entirely different point of view than the classic green bean casserole, but still sort of hits those homey feelings, and it feels like it's a lot quicker than making the green bean casserole.

Kathleen: Agreed. It's also, again, one less thing in your oven. And if you're planning a meal and you're thinking, "Are there actually enough vegetables on this table," this one legitimately feels like a vegetable dish that's downright delicious.

Tara: The classic green bean casserole, it's a very traditional Thanksgiving table entry, but this one feels like it could be served almost anytime.

Kathleen: Absolutely.

Tara: And I'm getting a red and green color vibe from it too.

Kathleen: You would get the red from not only the sweet chili sauce, but the red onions that are also in the recipe. That would definitely add that color.

Matt: I think something spicy is almost always missing, at least from the Thanksgiving tables I frequent. So I like this addition.

Tara: I might up the spicy a little more and I might add some of our crunchy chili onion sprinkle that we have. That's my very favorite seasoning that we sell right now. I put it on most things. Yeah.

*[Music ends. Music build up begins.]*

Tara: And I think we have one more recipe. We said three, right?

Matt: Is the Trader Joe's crew chorus ready?

*[Chorus warming up.]*

Tara: I think they are.

Matt: And go for it.

Chorus: (singing like a countdown version) 🎵 Number one. 🎵

Kathleen: Wow. Such a production.

*[Fanfare music.]*

Tara: We spare no expense at *Inside Trader Joe's*, Kathleen.

*[Transition to soft upbeat music.]*

Kathleen: I have lots of favorite holiday recipes, but if I really had to choose just one, Risotto-Stuffed Delicata Squash.

Tara: I'm 100% in. Do you know that I'm the world's biggest delicata squash fan?

Kathleen: Now I do.

Tara: Oh my gosh. Truly my very favorite member of the squash family.

Kathleen: There are no crunchy leaves in this recipe, but you definitely get those feels when you make it.

Matt: I'm hoping it's full of hacks and tips because risotto-stuffed squash does not sound quick, nor does it sound easy.

Kathleen: And that's where I got you, Matt.

*[Music transition.]*

Kathleen: We are using Trader Joe's Frozen Mushroom Risotto for part of the filling, so you're really just thawing it on the stove. Delicata squash is so cool because you don't have to peel it. Cooking it in the oven, it becomes fork-tender, and you can eat the whole thing easily, so it makes prep a ton easier than a typical squash.

Tara: You're cutting it in half lengthwise, scooping out the seeds, and that's where you're stuffing the risotto?

Kathleen: That's going to be the vessel, the edible vessel.

Tara: That's pretty cool. So it's the mushroom risotto. What else is in there?

Kathleen: So you're heating up the mushroom risotto and you're adding kale to it, another very folly, very autumnal filling. And once those are heated through, you are studding it with dried cranberries and pecans.

Tara: You're mixing all those things together, or you're putting the cranberries and pecans at the top?

Matt: The verb studding was involved, so I think maybe just a little bit on top?

Kathleen: We stud a little differently, Matt. After-

Matt: Truer words were never spoken.

Kathleen: (laughs) You have your sauté pan going. You have the warmed risotto with the sautéed kale. Once they come off the heat, you can stir in and stud the mixture with cranberries and pecans. Swap out for whatever nut you find preferable if pecans aren't in your thing, even though they're one of the best nuts, and some black pepper Toscano, because yes to cheese.

*[Music transition to light piano music.]*

Matt: Okay.

Tara: We are all in agreement on yes to cheese.

Kathleen: Excellent.

Matt: I'm thinking this makes a great center of the plate. This could be the whole meal.

Kathleen: It could and should be, whether it's for someone who just doesn't eat meat or for everybody. The presentation is really exceptional when you bring it out to the table. It's a fork and knife sort of thing, unless you want to use a spoon.

Tara: Well, you use a spoon for the filling. I'm going to say that generally speaking, a spoon isn't going to cut it, so to speak.

Matt: In a recent episode of this podcast, we talked about a couple of wines that would be great at a Thanksgiving table: a chardonnay, a pinot noir. I think both of them, each of them would be amazing with this Stuffed Delicata Squash.

Tara: I'm looking at the photo that goes along with this recipe on [traderjoes.com](https://www.traderjoes.com). I want to make this for dinner tonight. It looks so delicious. And I'm thinking if you served this at Thanksgiving, you might have a whole bunch of people who don't want turkey because this is so enticing. But I think if you are that person who doesn't eat meat at a Thanksgiving feast, what a gift this would be. You would know that the host of that dinner really thought a lot of you to go to the trouble of making this, and it's really not all that much trouble.

Kathleen: And just to go a little further, should you make this dish after Thanksgiving, folding some of that cooked turkey into the filling might really send things over the top, if that's what you're into.

Tara: Kathleen, I think we might have to have you back for more little mini recipe podcasts because this was really fun. Thanks for bringing this to us.

Kathleen: Yes, please. There are a lot more recipes on [traderjoes.com/recipes](https://www.traderjoes.com/recipes) during the holidays and all year round.

*[Transition to closing music.]*

Tara: We have another podcast or two planned for 2025 and more in 2026. Hit that free follow or subscribe button.

Matt: It *is* free and worth every penny.

Tara: Until next time, thanks for listening.

Matt: And thanks for listening.

Kathleen: And one, two, three!

Big Group: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!