

The Ultimate Holiday Ham Guide

By gThankYou , LLC



INTRODUCTION

A glazed ham is the perfect centerpiece for any holiday celebration. If you've never prepared one before, gThankYou is here to help with this quick step-by-step guide that will take you from grocery store to table.

In this guide we give you the basics on ham: how to select, prepare, cook, and carve a ham. And of course, we have recipes! There are dozens of ways to prepare a ham and many options for glazes—including sweet soda pop, bourbon, wine, mustard, breadcrumbs...and even gingersnaps!

We have ideas for leftovers, too, from New Year's Eve appetizers to simple weeknight suppers.

At gThankYou, we know the thoughtful gift of a family-friendly ham is just the beginning of a holiday celebration. Use this guide to get started, and happy cooking!



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PART ONE: PLANNING & DECISIONS

WHAT IS HAM?

Ham is a cut of meat taken from the thigh and leg of a pig. Ham can be cooked fresh, cured with a dry or wet brine mixture, or smoked. Most ham in the supermarket is either wet- or dry-cured. The ham (like the loin, Boston butt or pork shoulder, and spare ribs) is considered a primal cut – in other words - one of the main components of the pig.

Most butcher shops now work with sub-primal cuts of both pork and beef. For example, ham may be divided into butt and shank sections before being further broken down into a cured ham, a fresh ham roast, fresh ham steak or center ham slices.

TYPES OF HAM

Several types of ham are available at the supermarket (see Chart 1. Types of Ham).

Chart 1: Types of Ham

	WHAT THEY DID	WHAT YOU DO	EXAMPLES
Fresh Ham also known as Uncured Ham	Raw Ham (not cooked or smoked)	Must be cooked before eating. Roast or grill	Ham roast
Wet-Cured Ham also known as Brine-Cured Ham, City Ham or Baked Ham	Curing ingredients were injected into the meat. May be partially cooked	Must be cooked*	Hormel, Cook's Nueske's and HoneyBaked Ham
Dry-Cured Ham also known as Country Ham	Meat is rubbed with curing ingredients; Hung to dry; aged three months to three years. Some are smoked	Some dry-cured hams should be warmed; others roasted. Other dry-cured hams are labeled "Ready-to-eat" by USDA	Prosciutto di Parma & Pancetta (Italy); Jamón Serrano (Spain); Country Ham (Southern U.S.)

**The exception is ham sold sliced at the deli has been smoked or baked and can be eaten without further cooking.*



Most hams sold in the United States are cured rather than fresh. Curing preserves the meat and adds flavor.

Fresh ham is not cured. It is the raw cut of meat taken from the thigh or leg of a pig. It *must* be cooked (or cured) before it is eaten. Raw ham can be roasted (like pork roast) or grilled. Fresh ham is not common in the United States, but you can probably get one at your butcher or a local farmers' market.

Cured hams can be dry-cured or wet-cured. Curing uses salt and sugar, flavorings and sometimes chemicals to preserve the meat. Curing can also improve the texture and flavor of the meat. Most hams sold in the United States are cured so are likely to be “pre-cooked,” **says Michigan State University Extension**, but ask at the meat counter in the store to be sure. Sliced deli ham is smoked or cured, and it can be eaten without further cooking.

Wet-cured hams are preserved with a saltwater brine that may include other ingredients for flavor, tenderizing the meat, or longer preservation. Also called “city hams,” these may also be injected with brine. After brining, these hams may be smoked, boiled or baked.

Typically these “baking” hams are sold “pre-cooked,” and include brands such as Hormel, Cook’s, Nueske’s and HoneyBaked Ham. You unwrap the ham, put it in the oven to heat thoroughly, and eat it. Wet-cured are the hams we are most familiar with in the United States.

QUICK TIP

If you have questions about labels on a ham or what preparations are needed for a particular ham, ask the butcher where you buy it.



Dry-cured hams are among the world's most prized hams. Best known among dry-cured hams are prosciutto di Parma and pancetta from Italy, Jamón Serrano from Spain, and country hams from the southern United States. These are preserved by applying a rub and hanging them to dry and age under controlled conditions for a minimum of three months and up to three years. Dry-cured hams have more intense flavor than a city ham; they are sold smoked or unsmoked.

Other labels you might find on ham:

Water added: This label indicates the ham has been injected with additional brine to increase the ham's weight. Water-added hams are cheaper, but water dilutes flavor.

Boneless: Boneless hams have been processed and reshaped into an oval, sometimes with ground ham as a binder.

Picnic ham: Pork shoulder, usually smoked and fully cooked. Not technically a ham, but it has similar flavor.

QUICK TIP

If you can find a fresh ham and want to dry-cure it yourself, see instructions at the [University of Missouri Extension](#), Michael Ruhlman's website and/or his new book, "[Salumi: The Craft of Italian Dry Curing](#)."



HOW TO CHOOSE A HAM

Bone or No Bone?

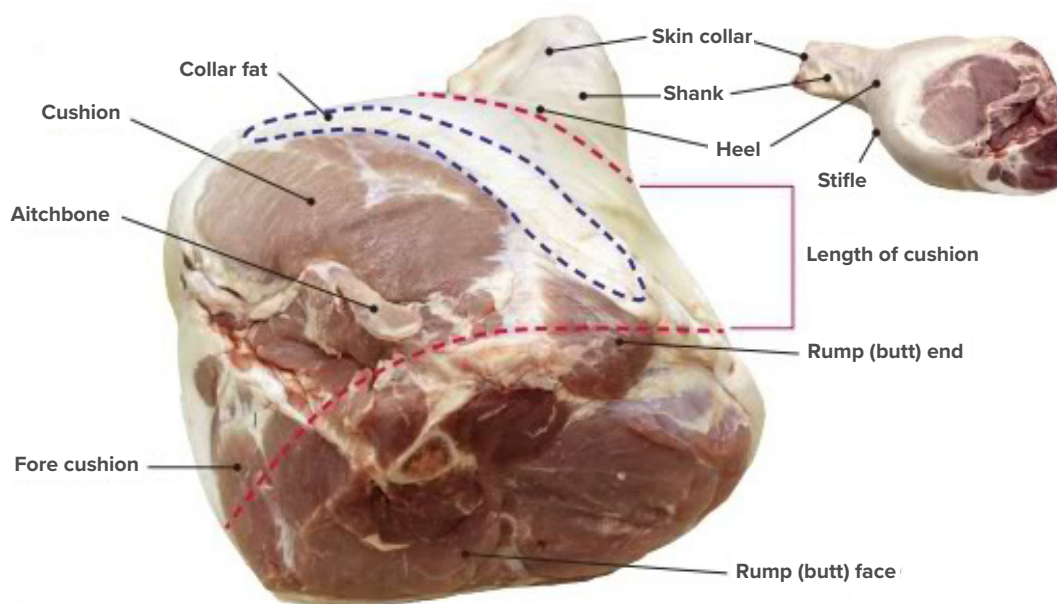
A boneless ham is just what it sounds like – a ham with the bone removed. It is then shaped into a tight oval so it looks like one solid piece of meat.

The Food Lab's Definitive Guide to Buying and Cooking Hams claims that taking the bone out of a ham may make it easier to slice, but it robs it of some of its flavor. Chef and culinary consultant J. Kenji Lopez-Alt prefers bone-in hams, suggesting that processing likely removes some of the natural juices from ham. However, ease of carving may make boneless ham a better option for some people.

The Shank and the Butt

Most hams from conventional hogs are about 15 pounds, a lot of ham for most families. So many butchers package them into two ends: the butt and the shank ends.

The butt is meatier and leaner and often costs a little more; most cooks prefer the shank which tends to be more fatty, more flavorful, and easier to carve.



Shank and butt, diagram. Source: Virginia Cooperative Extension.



QUICK TIP

“Pre-cooked” hams may be labeled “ready to eat” but they still need a long, slow braise in the oven before serving.

Spiral Versus Whole Ham

A spiral ham is pre-sliced and falls apart with one cut--though it may require more work than with a whole ham to keep the meat from drying out while cooking. A whole ham is harder to carve.

For most people, a spiral ham is the best choice. For help in preparing a spiral ham that retains moisture in the meat, see eHow on **The Best Way to Keep Spiral Ham Moist When Baking.**

Pre-Glazed

HoneyBaked Hams, for example, come already glazed. Starting with the glaze at the beginning of cooking usually requires careful cooking at low heat, covering with a foil tent, and cooking with water in the pan so the glaze does not burn. Other pre-cooked hams come with a glaze packet, which you would apply in the last hour of cooking for the same reason.

To glaze a ham with your own recipe, see **WHAT GLAZE TO USE?** in **PART TWO: COOKING METHODS & RECIPES.**

QUICK TIP

If you choose a pre-glazed ham, put in the extra effort to cover the ham with a foil tent, cook with water in the pan, and baste frequently so the glaze doesn't burn.



HOW MUCH HAM SHOULD I BUY?

A simple estimate is to plan for $\frac{3}{4}$ to one pound of ham per person for bone-in ham, and closer to a half pound of ham per person for boneless ham as a main course. Buy a bit more if you want leftovers.

Remember that the bigger the ham, the longer it will take to defrost and cook, and the harder it is to keep the meat from drying out while cooking.

Chart 2. Amount of Ham Needed per Person

TYPE OF HAM	APPETIZER	MAIN COURSE
Bone-in City Ham	3 ounces per person	8-10 ounces per person
Boneless City Ham	2 ounces per person	6-8 ounces per person
Country Ham	3 ounces per person	3-4 ounces per person





A HOLIDAY HAM TIMELINE

Once you have information about thawing and cooking times you can select a recipe and cooking method, plan the entire meal preparation, and get to work in the kitchen making your holiday ham.

Thawing

Thawing a frozen ham can take a fair amount of time—so be sure to plan ahead. There are several methods for thawing but most chefs agree that a slow thaw in the refrigerator gives the best results.

Thawing in the refrigerator is also the safest method. Plan on 24 hours for every five pounds of ham weight. Place the ham in a shallow pan to catch liquid drips. And be sure to keep it in the refrigerator.

Chart 3. Thawing a Ham: Refrigerator Method

Small Ham	4-5 hours per pound
Large Roast	5-7 hours per pound

Source: Linda Stradley, “Ham 101,” *What’s Cooking America*

If necessary, you can also thaw ham in cold tap water—if you take care to do it safely. Put the ham in a sealed plastic bag or in its original packaging, if it’s sealed. Replace the water every 30 minutes and be sure the water stays cold. Keep other dishes and food out of the sink during defrosting and be sure to sanitize the sink when done. For complete food safety instructions, see **Cold Water Method** at **What’s Cooking America**.

Chart 4. Thawing a Ham: Cold Water Method

Small Ham	2-3 hours
Large Roast	30 minutes

Source: Linda Stradley, “Ham 101,” *What’s Cooking America*

QUICK TIP

Thawing ham in the refrigerator is the recommended method. It is not safe to thaw meat on the kitchen counter.



QUICK TIP

*According to the **USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service** and the **National Pork Board**, a ham thawed in the refrigerator is safe for four days in the refrigerator, or until its “use-by” date.*

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

These basic tools are helpful when preparing a whole ham. The recipe you use may call for additional tools-- depending on the one you choose.

- **Rimmed baking sheet or roasting pan.** Make sure it's big enough for your ham.
- **Aluminum foil.** Line the sheet or roasting pan with aluminum foil. (Some people add a layer of parchment paper on top of the foil layer.)
- **Meat thermometer.** An instant-read meat thermometer has a metal probe that you briefly put into the thickest part of the ham to test the temperature. Food safety experts consider the use of a meat thermometer the most accurate way to determine if the ham is safely cooked.
- **Platter.** Use a platter large enough to display the ham nicely for serving. Warm the platter before laying meat on it.
- **Cutting board.** For carving the ham.
- **Carving knife & fork.** A carving fork will be long enough to hold the ham firmly while you carve. Use a 10-12" long carving knife with a straight (not serrated) edge.
- **Saucepan.** Your glaze recipe may require you to heat ingredients to make the glaze.
- **Small bowl.** Transfer the glaze to a small bowl once it's ready to put on the ham.
- **Basting brush or baster.** Use a basting brush or baster to brush the glaze on the ham, as instructed in the recipe you have chosen.

If you're planning to grill or smoke, you'll need tongs, a grill brush and related grilling tools to accommodate that. The same goes for a deep-fryer.



PART TWO: COOKING METHODS & RECIPES

BAKING

The most common way to prepare a ham at home is roasting it in the oven. As we’ve mentioned, most city hams come precooked, or “ready to cook,” which means they’ve been heated to 145°F. **They still need a long, slow braise in the oven to become dinner table-ready, however.**

If you’ve picked out a ham from the store, the package label may suggest reheating it at 350°F for 18 minutes per pound (for example--two hours and 24 minutes for an eight-pound ham). See baking times for ham (chart below) from **How to Cook Ham for a Classic Holiday Dinner (Better Homes and Gardens)**.

Approximate baking times are based on a ham taken directly from the refrigerator. When the ham reaches the “final temperature,” it’s time to remove it from the oven.

CHART 5. Baking Times for Ham

TYPE OF HAM	WEIGHT	BAKING TIME HOURS	FINAL TEMPERATURE
Boneless Cooked Ham	1-3 pounds	3/4 to 1-1/4	140 degrees F
Bone-in Cooked Ham	5-8 pounds	1-1/2 to 2-1/4 hours	140 degrees F
Bone-in Ham, cook before eating (fresh)	3-5 pounds	2-1/2 - 3-1/4 hours	150 degrees F

**Hams that weigh more than 8 pounds should be loosely covered with foil halfway through roasting. Sources: Lisa Holderness Brown, “How to Bake Ham,” Better Homes and Gardens*

According to **food writer Derrick Riches**: “The traditional method is to roast the ham at 325°F, for 15 to 20 minutes per pound for a whole ham, and 18 to 25 minutes per pound for half hams. I prefer to keep this temperature lower and increase the time if I am heating a ‘ready to eat ham.’”



QUICK TIP

Baking and roasting are both dry methods of cooking. Generally, meats are roasted uncovered, though you may want to put a tent of aluminum foil over the ham to keep the meat from drying out.

BOILING

Some chefs boil smaller chunks of a ham to make a ham dinner (though this is more often done with smoked pork or uncooked ham). Boiling can also be a first step in preparing a fresh ham.

One example is Nigella Lawson's "**Fully Festive Ham.**" She recommends boiling or soaking the ham in water (then tossing the water) to remove some of the saltiness. Then the ham is gently simmered in apple and cranberry juice, onion, allspice and cinnamon for added flavoring.

GRILLING

Grilling ham for 15 minutes per pound will add sensational flavor. Place the ham away from the heat source, never directly above the charcoal or gas heat. Put a pan of water under the ham and cook with the cover on the grill to create an "oven." To keep the meat moist, wrap one end with aluminum foil and baste the ham with a glaze several times during grilling.

For more details on grilling ham, see: **How to: Grilled Ham from Kingsford** (video).

For more details on grilling a fresh ham, see: **Grilled Fresh Ham by Food.com**

QUICK TIP

When grilling, clean-up will be easier if you use a grill-safe aluminum pie pan or tray under the ham that can hold water. This helps keep the ham moist and will also minimize sticky drips from the ham glaze getting on the grill.



SMOKING

Another wonderful way to prepare a ham is smoking. If you don't have a smoker, you can turn a backyard grill into a smoker. The process is relatively simple.

If you have a kettle grill, see **How to Turn your Kettle Grill into a Smoker**. You'll need a couple of metal pans (the disposable kind from the grocery store work well). Fill them halfway with water and place them at the bottom of the grill.

First, soak wood chips in a bowl of water, 30 minutes minimum, or as long as overnight. Popular wood choices are apple wood, hickory and alder wood.

You can use a **chimney starter** with a charcoal grill. When the coals are white, place them on the sides of the grill so they won't be right under the ham. Add the soaked wood chips on top of the charcoal on one side of the grill. Be sure to place the ham away from the coals.

If you have a gas grill, make a pouch out of aluminum foil and put the soaked wood chips inside. Poke some holes in the pouch and put it down by the burners. Turn on the grill; when the pouch begins to smoke, you're ready to grill — keep the cooking low and slow.

For smoking time, estimate 20-25 minutes per pound---and check it often. As with the other methods, the ham is done when a thermometer reads 140°F (not touching bone).

DEEP FRYING

If you have a deep fryer and know how to use it (outside the house, of course), check out Paula Deen's recipe for **Deep-Fried Ham**.

Deen recommends brining the ham overnight, drying it, and then carefully submerging it in a fryer with peanut oil, heated to 375°F. Deen's uncooked ham cooks faster than any other method – just 7-1/2 minutes per pound. It's done when the interior of the ham has reached a temperature of 160°F.

A precooked ham requires just a quick immersion in oil to get crispy, 7-9 minutes.

QUICK TIP

Peanut oil has a high smoke point and is a good choice for deep-frying. Be careful not to overfill the fryer – a whole ham displaces a lot of oil.



PICKING A HAM RECIPE

There are many great recipes for ham. Choose one of these, or find your own, to prepare your ham feast. Once you pick the recipe you want to prepare, the recipe's instructions will guide you.

- **Ham.** Pork Checkoff Council.
- **Baked Ham Recipes.** The Food Network.
- **How to Cook Ham for a Classic Holiday Dinner.** Better Homes and Gardens.
- **Fully Festive Ham.** Nigella Lawson on The Food Network.
- **How to Grill a Ham.** Derrick Riches, The Spruce Eats.
- **Deep-Fried Ham.** Paula Deen.
- **Ham in Cola.** Nigella Lawson, Food Network.
- **Apricot-Bourbon Glazed Ham.** Martha Stewart.
- **Country Ham (with Dr. Pepper).** Alton Brown, Food Network.
- **Old-Fashioned Holiday Glazed Ham.** The Neely's, Food Network.
- **Holiday Ham.** Chowhound.
- **Fire and Spice Ham.** My Recipes.



WHAT GLAZE TO USE?

Glaze increases success on a holiday ham for two reasons: glazes are typically a sweet counterpoint to the smoky and salty ham. And once cooked, the glaze can form a crunchy and flavorful crust, complementing the tender interior of the ham.

Be sure to follow the instructions for glazing in your recipe. Most chefs recommend putting the glaze on at the end of cooking so it will not burn in the oven.

Get the most flavor from your glaze by scoring the ham before it goes into the oven or grill. Again, it's best to put glaze on the ham during the second half of cooking--to avoid a burnt glaze.

Use Paula Deen's advice for a *Baked Sugared Ham*: "Scoring ham makes it look pretty, lets the fat render so that it crisps up, and helps the glaze seep into the ham better, giving you maximum flavor. To score your ham, remove the thick rind but leave about a 1/4-inch-thick layer of fat on top of the meat. Use a very sharp knife to lightly slice into the fat and create a diamond pattern over the whole surface."

The most popular glazes are very simple, and most include a combination of ingredients. See ideas for glaze ingredients on the next page.

QUICK TIP

Put glaze on the ham at the end of cooking so it will not burn in the oven.



How to Make Honey Glazed Ham (video) Allrecipes.

Soda

One of the most popular ingredients for a ham glaze is cola, which gives ham a sweet, sticky crust. British cooking show host and food writer **Nigella Lawson** pours a 2-liter bottle of Coke over her ham. Martha Stewart uses cola with whiskey on ham. And **Alton Brown** glazes his country ham with Dr. Pepper and sweet pickle juice!

Bourbon or Whiskey

Alcohol is commonly used in glazes: beer, bourbon, whiskey and dark rum. Cooks say spirits keep the meat moist and add complexity to the flavor. Port and Madeira are popular for their sweetness, and bourbon adds a smoky touch.

Most recipes that include spirits can accommodate substitutes easily. Try Ham with Bourbon, Molasses and Pecan Glaze at Epicurious.com, or swap out bourbon for brandy, rum and other spirits for additional great flavors.

Honey/Brown Sugar/Molasses

Honey, brown sugar and molasses can help balance the smokiness in ham and give nice caramelization to the crust.

Fruit

Pineapple is popular on ham, as are maraschino cherries, figs and oranges. Often glaze recipes call for jam, juice, canned fruit or preserves which may be easier to find than fresh fruit in colder months.

Mustard

Dijon mustard balances the sweetness in a ham glaze giving it a bit of spice and heat. Some recipes call for dried English mustard or stone ground mustard.

Breadcrumbs

Some ham recipes, such as this Easter Ham with Golden Breadcrumbs and Madeira Sauce, from Bon Appétit, call for an ingredient with a crunchy texture, like fresh breadcrumbs, or gingersnap cookies.

Spices

Cloves are the most common spice to add to a ham glaze. You can also try thyme, bay leaves, ginger and baking spices like cinnamon and nutmeg.



WHEN IS THE HAM DONE ?

Insert a thermometer into the center of the ham, making sure it is not touching the bone. When it reads the temperature you're looking for (140°F for a pre-cooked/reheated ham, or 150°F for a fresh ham), pull the ham out of the oven, set it on a cutting board, and cover it. Let it sit for at least 10 minutes before carving.

QUICK TIP

No matter what method you use, let the meat rest for at least 10 minutes before carving. It will make the ham meat juicier.





PART THREE: OTHER HAM ESSENTIALS

CARVING THE HAM

After you've let the ham rest for **at least 10 minutes** it will be ready to carve.

For video instruction on how to carve a ham see:

- **How to Carve a Ham.** Cooks Illustrated.
- **How to Carve a Nueske's Spiral Sliced Bone-In Ham.** Nueske's.

To carve a bone-in ham, use a long, sharp knife – a carving knife or a chef's knife will work equally well. Place the ham on a cutting board on its widest side. Cut the ham crosswise in two or three places before slicing lengthwise, so slices of ham fall off in smaller pieces.

Starting at the largest end, cut slices perpendicular to the bone. After you've cut this section of the ham, turn and slice another side. Repeat.

Spiral-sliced HoneyBaked hams are pre-sliced. Just cut at the base of each slice and serve.

QUICK TIP

*Still confused about carving? Check out our post on gThankYou, “**How to cook, glaze and carve a holiday ham,**” for links to carving guides on Real Simple and Saveur.*



HAM LEFTOVERS & FOOD SAFETY

City ham that's been reheated is good for three to five days in the refrigerator, or up to two months in the freezer. Country ham lasts about a week in the refrigerator, or a month in the freezer. See the **Ham Storage Chart** from the **United States Department of Agriculture** for food safety instructions.

Ham is among the most versatile meats to use in leftovers, bringing with it a saltiness and hearty flavor that enhances everything from eggs to pasta. Try some of these recipes with leftover ham.

APPETIZERS

Ham and Cheese in Puff Pastry from Ina Garten (Food Network). This recipe starts with premade puff pastry and comes out of the oven bubbling and delicious. You can vary the cheese — cheddar is great for a more kid-friendly version, as is part-skim mozzarella — and any hard cheese could substitute for Gruyere.

Smoked Ham Roll-ups from Nueske's Applewood Smoked Meats: These roll-ups are another take on the “make something big and cut it into small bites” school of appetizers. You could skip the horseradish, add some chopped sundried tomatoes to the cream cheese or add green onions for color and flavor.

Deviled Ham. from Chowhound, is easy to make in a food processor and comes out as a smooth spread with ham, pickle relish, Dijon mustard, mayonnaise and spices. Serve it on bread or with crackers.

Mini Buttermilk Biscuits with Ham, Arugula and Fig Preserves from Louisa's Catering are tasty little sandwiches, and a riff on the classic fig/ham combination often served as tapas (usually with a dry-cured ham like Parma or pancetta). Fresh arugula lends crunch and a touch of spice, while the fig preserves go beautifully with the saltiness of the ham.

Ham and Cheese Mini Frittatas, from Rachel Ray, are bite-sized frittatas you can bake in a mini-muffin pan. They're savory, surprisingly light, and simple to make. These taste great hot or at room temperature, so it works well to make them ahead.



ENTREES

Chicken, Ham, and Fennel Pot Pie, from Epicurious, is an updated version of an old standby and great comfort food for many people.

Ham and Sweet Potato Hash with Fried Eggs, from Epicurious, is a tasty meal option for leftover ham and sweet potatoes, and a hearty start to the day.

Green eggs and ham frittata, from Eating Well, features leftover ham and fresh spinach. It's a versatile meal good for breakfast, brunch, or dinner.

Hearty Ham Soup recipes, in many versions, are available from Allrecipes, and make welcomed comfort meals complete with warm crusty bread and a salad.

Cauliflower and Ham au Gratin is an easy and delicious dinner recipe from 30-minute chef Rachael Ray.

USING THE HAM BONE

Don't toss the bone once the ham is carved – there's tons of flavor in it and many recipes to try! Bean soups especially benefit from a long simmer with a ham bone, whether or not there's much meat left on the bone. If there is meat, that's a bonus; slice the meat off at the end and add it to the soup.

Allow at least two hours of simmering for each of these soups, and know that they're just as good reheated for lunch or for dinner the next day.

Split Pea Soup, from Ina Garten's Barefoot Contessa Cookbook, is a hearty staple and delicious when studded with bits of ham. To use your ham bone in this recipe, submerge it in the soup during the last 40 minutes of cooking.

Monday's Red Beans and Rice, from John Besh's coffee table-worthy cookbook My New Orleans, is a fragrant pot of red beans and rice that starts with the trinity of green pepper, celery, onion, and gets its flavor not only from smoked ham hocks, but also from bacon fat, cayenne pepper and, of course, Louisiana-made Tabasco sauce. These red beans freeze well, too.



Ham bone soup, adapted by Melissa Clark from an old Junior League cookbook confirms that everything tastes better with bacon. According to Clark, in The New York Times: “The soup was simple: boil a bone with beans and a bay leaf, and dinner was done.” Add a green salad and some crusty bread and you have a wonderful meal to share and savor!

QUICK TIP

Beans absorb a lot of fat, so there may be little fat to skim if everything goes in one pot. If you make a broth first with the ham bone, let it cool and refrigerate it, then it's easy to skim off the layer of fat the following day.





PART FOUR: SIDE DISHES & MENU IDEAS

WINTER SIDE DISHES

In midwinter, starchy roots and hearty greens pair well with sweet-and-salty ham. You can even be a bit decadent here – it’s the holidays, after all!

Brussels Sprouts

Brussels Sprouts with Chestnuts, Pancetta and Parsley is from Nigella Lawson’s beautiful cookbook “Feast”. Lawson adds even more flavor with a few tablespoons of butter and sweet Marsala wine.

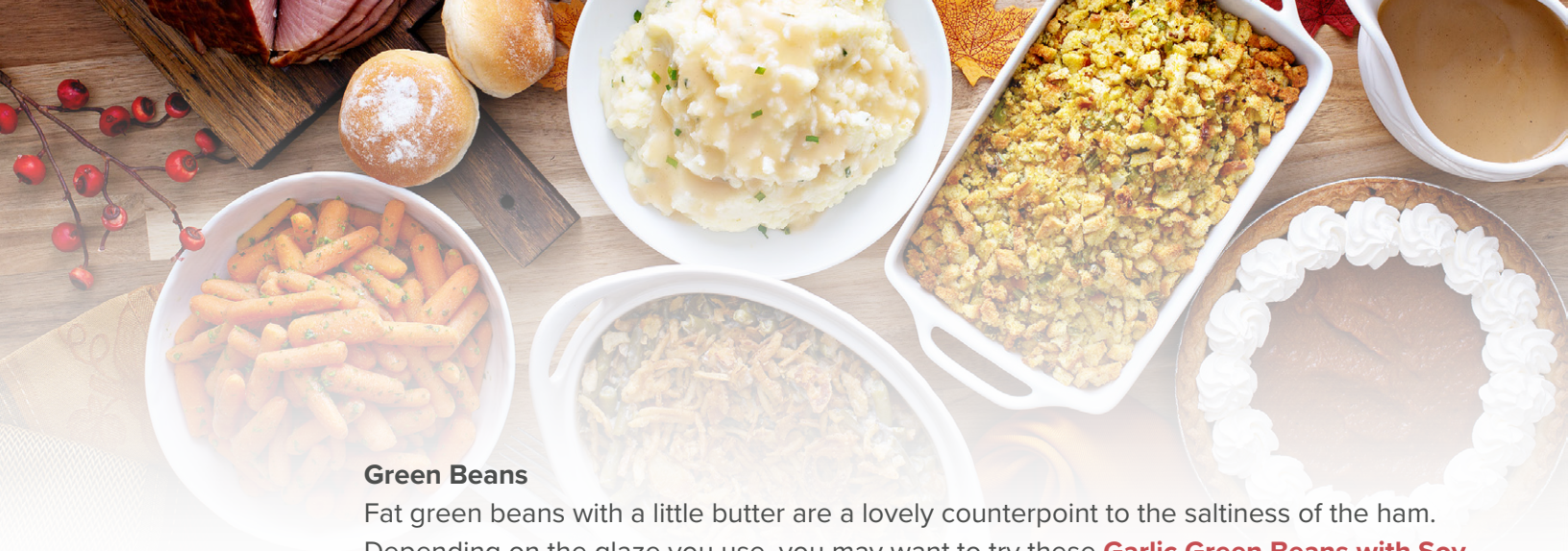
Roasted Brussels Sprouts with pomegranate seeds, roasted pecans and vanilla-almond butter is another good option from Bobby Flay, Food Network.

Sweet Potatoes

One of the easiest, most approachable sides during the winter months is sweet potatoes – one needs hardly do more than peel, chop and roast them in olive oil and a little salt and chili pepper. Dress them up a bit with Gabrielle Hamilton’s recipe **Yams with Crispy Skins and Brown-Butter Vinaigrette** or puree them into **Sweet Potato Soup With Feta and Za’atar Oil** (from Food52.com).

QUICK TIP

Many of these sides can be made ahead of time and reheated in the oven with the ham (or while the ham rests) shortly before serving time.



Green Beans

Fat green beans with a little butter are a lovely counterpoint to the saltiness of the ham. Depending on the glaze you use, you may want to try these **Garlic Green Beans with Soy Sauce**.

Winter Squash

Almost any variety of winter squash can be swapped for any other: butternut, acorn, kabocha or carnival. Try Ina Garten's **Maple-Roasted Butternut Squash** from Oprah.com.

SPRING SIDE DISHES

Side dishes for a spring ham are more than just table dressing. In addition to highlighting the ham itself (potatoes, for example, are excellent for soaking up extra glaze), side dishes like these below show off the best of new spring produce.

New Potatoes

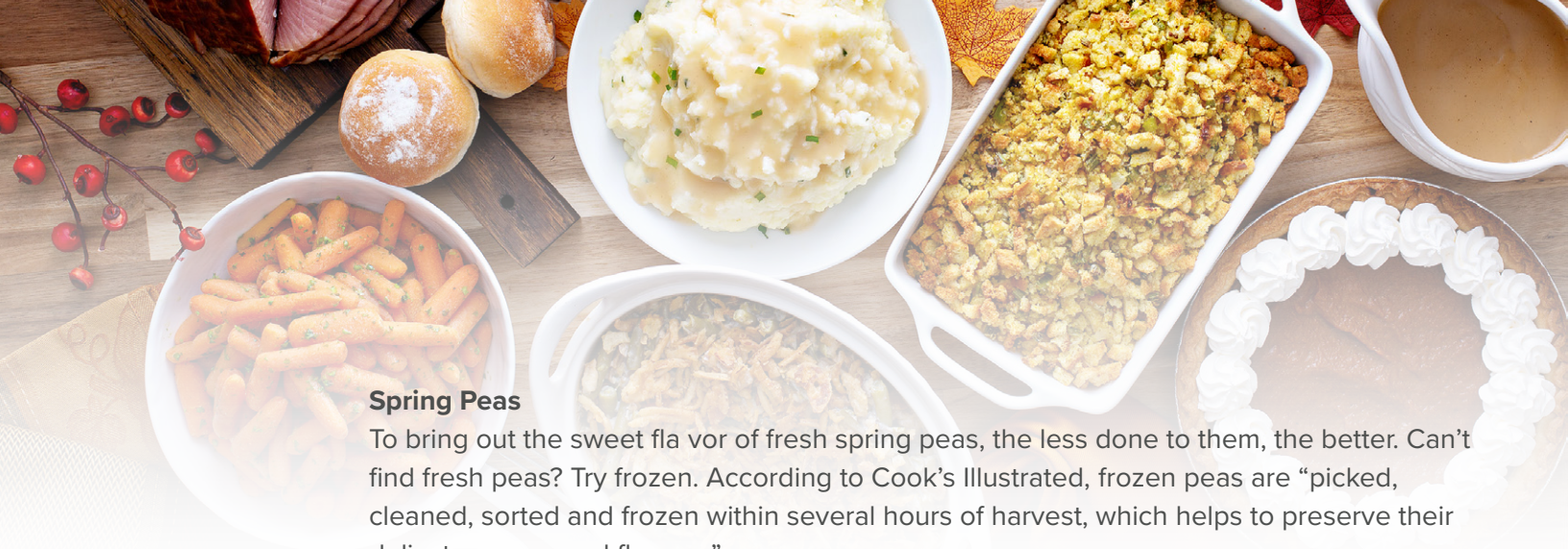
Potatoes are one of the most versatile sides on your spring table. They can be dressed up or down with ease. New potatoes or fingerlings are especially nice – they don't have to be peeled, and they're wonderful steamed. Or try **Roasted Fingerling Potatoes with Rosemary and Thyme** from Food Network. **Scalloped Potatoes**, such as this recipe from Real Simple, is a classic when paired with ham.

Asparagus

Roasted Asparagus, from Ina Garten at Food Network, is a wonderful spring side dish. Wrap it in bundles with a piece of prosciutto, or sprinkle with kosher salt and a squeeze of lemon.

QUICK TIP

For side dishes, think about ingredients that pair well with ham—like maple syrup, fruit, mustard or spices.



Spring Peas

To bring out the sweet flavor of fresh spring peas, the less done to them, the better. Can't find fresh peas? Try frozen. According to Cook's Illustrated, frozen peas are "picked, cleaned, sorted and frozen within several hours of harvest, which helps to preserve their delicate sugars and flavors."

Deviled Eggs

The classic mayonnaise/mustard combination is always a hit, but you can take holiday deviled eggs a step further with **Smoked Salmon Deviled Eggs** (recipe from the Barefoot Contessa), or scatter chopped dill pickles, tarragon or fresh fish roe on top.

Carrots

Spring carrots are thin and tasty. Sunny Anderson's **Honey Glazed Carrots** recipe sweetened with honey to complement the flavors in your ham.

FULL MENUS FOR HAM DINNER

If you're looking for suggestions for a full menu for your ham dinner, see:

- **Ham Salad on Biscuits.** Rachel Ray.
- **Baked Ham Menu.** Bon Appétit.
- **Our 20 Most-Popular Easter Dinner Recipes.** Food Network.
- **5 Best Christmas Ham Recipes** Cook's Country.
- **Top 25 Traditional Easter Dinner Ideas.** The Spruce Eats.
- **Menus to Make Easter Planning Easier.** cookinglight.com
- **The Best Christmas Dinner Menus to Share this Holiday Season.** Better Homes and Gardens.
- **Honey-Glazed Baked Ham Easter Dinner – Menu and Recipes.** What's Cooking America.

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