

Seasonal Eating
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Holiday Cooking Made Easy with Convenience Items
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The holidays are such a busy time. With family meals to prepare along with potlucks, finger food parties and large family gatherings, it seems like we're always in the kitchen making something. Convenience products can be a big help during this month to save time and effort.

Prewashed and prepared vegetables are always a help and even if you don't normally purchase these products, you might want to try them for the holidays. Celery sticks that are already washed and cut into lengths either for chopping or for vegetable platters, crinkle cut carrot coins, broccoli and cauliflower already broken into florets, even pre-chopped celery and onions can be a big time saver in the kitchen.



Look for pre-chopped nuts and toast the whole bag as soon as you get home so you don't have to stop during each recipe to toast the nuts.

Another great holiday convenience product is canned cranberry sauce. The whole berry version can be used with a can of drained, crushed pineapple and toasted walnuts for a quick salad. The jellied cranberry sauce can be melted and used as a glaze for sweet potatoes or ham.

Crescent roll dough is also a big helper for everything from appetizers to desserts to brunch dishes. You can spread a filling on the triangles and then cut each into 2 or 3 long skinny triangles and roll up and bake for fun little snacks or appetizers. I have used cream cheese thinned with a little milk with crumbled bacon and onion powder or sometimes I finely chop olives and toasted pecans and mix with grated Parmesan cheese to fill the rolls.

Below is a recipe using the crescent roll dough as the bottom and top of a little sandwich like appetizer filled with the Italian goodness of ham, salami, pepperoni, cheese, peppers and spinach. It bakes in a 9"x13" pan and then you cut it into small (2" or so) squares to serve. It makes a good accompaniment to a bowl of tomato soup for a quick weeknight dinner or a finger food for a game day or tree decorating party.

Not everything for your holiday meals has to be from scratch. Use a cake mix and then make your own frosting for a homemade taste. Pick up frozen rolls or get a pre-cooked turkey and add your own sides or make your own main dish and use prepared mashed potatoes and a purchased dessert. My brother's family often gets a smoked turkey breast from their local barbecue restaurant and then adds their own sides and desserts.

Take time to enjoy the holidays and look for products that can help you in the kitchen and make life simpler and easier during this busy season.

Visit the Bedford County Extension website for more recipes and information about seasonal eating (bedford.tennessee.edu).

Antipasti Crescent Squares

2 eggs, divided
2 cans crescent roll dough, divided
1/2 pound thinly sliced ham
1/4 pound sliced pepperoni
1/4 pound sliced salami
1/4 pound sliced provolone cheese
1/3 pound sliced Swiss cheese
1 (16-ounce) jar roasted red bell pepper, drained
1 1/2 cups or so baby spinach

In a small bowl, whisk together 1 egg and the white of the second egg. Place the remaining yolk in another bowl and set aside. In a greased 9"x13" pan, spread one can of crescent rolls on the bottom. Layer with ham, pepperoni, salami, provolone cheese, Swiss cheese, bell pepper and spinach. Pour the egg with egg white mixture over the layers. Top with the remaining can of crescent rolls and brush with the egg yolk. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 minutes, or until browned on top. Cool about 10-15 minutes before cutting into 24 squares.