Where allergens and diet issues hide at Thanksgiving

The same dish can be made a dozen ways, so read every label and ask every cook. This list shows where allergens and diet issues often hide in a Thanksgiving meal.

Food	⚠ Allergens it often or can contain	Diet watch-outs: halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan
Turkey	A basted or self-basting bird is injected with a solution that can include butter (milk) or broth. The label lists what is in it.	Many halal and kosher guests eat only certified meat. Ask them before you buy.
Stuffing or dressing	Wheat (bread), milk (butter) and often egg. Can contain tree nuts such as pecans or chestnuts.	Often made with turkey or chicken broth, sometimes with sausage, often pork. Stuffing cooked inside the bird is not vegetarian.
Gravy	Usually thickened with wheat flour. Gravy mixes can also contain milk and soy.	Made from meat drippings or broth. Some recipes add wine.
Mashed potatoes	Milk: butter, milk, cream, sometimes cream cheese.	Not vegan as usually made. Some recipes use chicken broth.
Green bean casserole	Often milk, wheat and soy, from canned cream soup and crispy fried onions.	Some versions add bacon (pork).
Sweet potato casserole	Often milk (butter) and egg. Pecan toppings are tree nuts.	Marshmallow topping: see the next row.
Marshmallows	Fish, when the gelatin is made from fish, as in some kosher marshmallows.	Most contain gelatin, often from pork. That matters for halal, kosher and vegetarian guests. Look for a halal or kosher mark, or marshmallows made without gelatin.
Pie crust	Wheat, often butter (milk), and an egg wash on top.	Some crusts are made with lard, which is pork fat.
Pumpkin and pecan pie	Egg and milk in the filling, wheat in the crust. Pecan pie is tree nuts.	Not vegan as usually made.
Rolls and bread	Wheat, often milk, egg and butter. Some have sesame seeds on top.	Some doughs use lard.
Mac and cheese	Milk and wheat, sometimes egg.	Some cheeses are made with animal rennet, which matters to many vegetarian and halal guests.
Salads and dressings	Dressings often contain egg, milk or soy. Caesar dressing usually has anchovy (fish). Nuts and seeds are common toppings.	Watch for bacon bits and cheese made with animal rennet.
Whipped topping	Milk. Non-dairy whipped topping often contains sodium caseinate, a milk protein.	Not vegan unless the label says so.
Gelatin salads and molds	Some add nuts, cream cheese or whipped topping.	Gelatin is often from pork or beef.
Wine, beer and vanilla extract	Beer is usually made from barley, and some from wheat.	Alcohol in cooking, sauces or vanilla extract matters to many halal guests.

Host tips

- Keep the packages, or a photo of each label, until the meal is over.
- Put out the dishes made for guests with allergies first, each with its own spoon.
- Label every dish, and tell guests what you do not know as well as what you do.

⚠ If you did not make it and read every label, you cannot confirm what is in it. When in doubt, say so.

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