Turkey Cranberry Cream Cheese Mold

4 small turkey-cranberry mini molds, about 220–225 ml each; modest cold turkey-course portions · Active 30 min · Total 10 hr

Ingredients

- 2 standard ¼-ounce envelopes unflavored powdered gelatin (14 g total), of specified setting strength
- 6 tablespoons cold drinking water (90 ml)
- 1 cup pasteurized whole milk (240 ml), divided
- 5¼ oz plain pasteurized full-fat cream cheese (150 g), kept cold
- ½ cup ready-to-eat canned whole-berry cranberry sauce (120 g)
- 2 tablespoons pasteurized orange juice (30 ml)
- 9 oz fully cooked ready-to-eat plain turkey meat (250 g), already safely chilled and cut into ½-inch (1 cm) pieces
- ⅛ teaspoon black pepper
- ½ teaspoon neutral oil (2.5 ml), divided for wiping molds

Set out

Small blender suitable for 500 ml cold mixture, Small saucepan, Mixing bowl and whisk, Knife and clean board, Scale and measuring jug, 4 small metal mini-loaf molds of at least 300 ml capacity each, Paper towel, Food thermometer, Cold plates, Refrigerator

Allergens

Milk. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Confirm the turkey’s cooked ready-to-eat state and original deadline through tomorrow’s service. Keep it cold. Check four mold capacities, empty, dry and oil lightly. Blend cream cheese, cranberry sauce and 180 ml milk until smoother, stopping before scraping; transfer to mixing bowl and keep refrigerated.

2. Bloom gelatin in 90 ml cold water in the small saucepan 5–10 minutes. Add remaining 60 ml milk and heat gently while stirring until fully dissolved, about 120–140°F (50–60°C). Take off heat before boiling.

3. Whisk 3 tablespoons cold cranberry-dairy mixture into warm gelatin gradually. When smooth and lukewarm, whisk back into the remaining cold mixture with orange juice and pepper. Refrigerate 15–25 minutes until lightly thickened, stirring gently. Fold in cold turkey pieces.

4. Divide among four mini-loaf molds, about 220–225 ml each, staying at least ½ inch (1.25 cm) below rims; put excess in a separate refrigerator cup. Cover and refrigerate at 40°F (4°C) or below at least 8 hours until firm. Allow 10 hours total, starting with cooked chilled turkey.

5. For unmolding, set a cold plate beside the refrigerator. Dip only the outside of the metal mold in warm, not hot, water, about 100°F (38°C), for 5–8 seconds without letting water touch food. Dry the outside, loosen just the upper edge with a clean fingertip and invert onto the plate. If stuck, repeat a brief dip rather than shaking violently. Refrigerate again immediately if not serving now. Serve one modest cold turkey-course mold per person.

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Gelatin starting strength

Use food-grade unflavored powdered gelatin with a manufacturer benchmark of 7 g for about 2 cups (500 ml) plain liquid. Weigh the stated grams: envelope sizes and powder density vary. A flavored dessert packet, collagen peptides, sheet gelatin or agar is not an equal substitute.

Cold service

This is an original retro-inspired recipe, not a recovered 1960s formula. Gelatin is animal-derived; the vegetable ingredients do not make the dish vegetarian. A reliable refrigerator and the stated earlier ingredient deadlines are essential.

Ingredient labels

Read turkey, cream cheese, cranberry sauce, juice and gelatin labels. Prepared meat may add other allergens.

A useful detail

Water/milk/orange juice totals 360 ml. Cream cheese 150 g, cranberry sauce 120 g and cooked turkey 250 g bring the mixture to roughly 900 ml. Fourteen grams gelatin supports the moist sweet-savory base. The four 300 ml molds provide more space than four brimful 225 ml cups.

Keep it well

Keep covered at 40°F (4°C) or below and use within 2 days of assembly AND within 3 days of the poultry's original cooking, or an earlier commercial opening/use-by deadline, whichever is sooner. The overnight set counts. Do not start with poultry too old to stay within its deadline through setting and service. Keep cumulative preparation/service below 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F (32°C); discard beyond those limits. Do not freeze the finished gel.