

5. Place your fingers in the center, and gently pull out and up on the corners from the opposite side, forming the buds. Set the finished product in the middle of the dinner plate; you can accessorize with a brooch, as above.

25th

THANKSGIVING

Last year the number one question on the Butterball Turkey Talk-Line was "How do I defrost this thing!?" Butterball recommends refrigerator thawing: one day for every four pounds. However, if the question doesn't come up until, say, November 24, submerging the turkey in cold water will expedite the process. For other questions, 50 home economists and nutritionists are standing by throughout the holiday season, ready to help in English or Spanish (800-BUTTERBALL: butterball.com).

26th

Don't go to a mall today, under any circumstances!

In 2003 consumers dropped \$7.2 billion in the 24-hour Turkey Day period.

At the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, every one of the more than 12,500 parking spaces was filled by 2 P.M. We say stop the madness and stay home (see November 30).

27th

Make peace with one person this year.

Take an adversarial coworker out to lunch, see your spouse's side of the story, or re-approach a sibling sore point--only this time, with more bend than brittle (unless it's macadamia nut brittle, in which case, all fences will be mended). Hilo Hattie Coconut Macadamia Nut Brittle; 888-526-0299; hilohattie.com.

29th

Trimming trends of 2004: "We're seeing a lot of clear blown-glass balls for trees and fir wreaths," says Joe Smith of the floral company Ilex in Nashville. "And reflective glass balls are appearing in rich winter shades like Venetian or berry red, emerald green, and taupe, gold, and burnt sienna." To complement these bursts of color, Smith recommends white lights instead of busy multicolored strings, and lightly "sugar frosted" ornaments over gobs of tinsel.

30th

Shop against the crowds. The quietest days to shop during the holidays are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, says Mall of America's trend specialist Sara Rogers. Midweek visits mean you avoid Monday shoppers inspired by Sunday ads, Thursday and Friday's roving teenagers and young moms, and the usual weekend hullabaloo.

december

1st

Book your babysitters as invitations arrive.