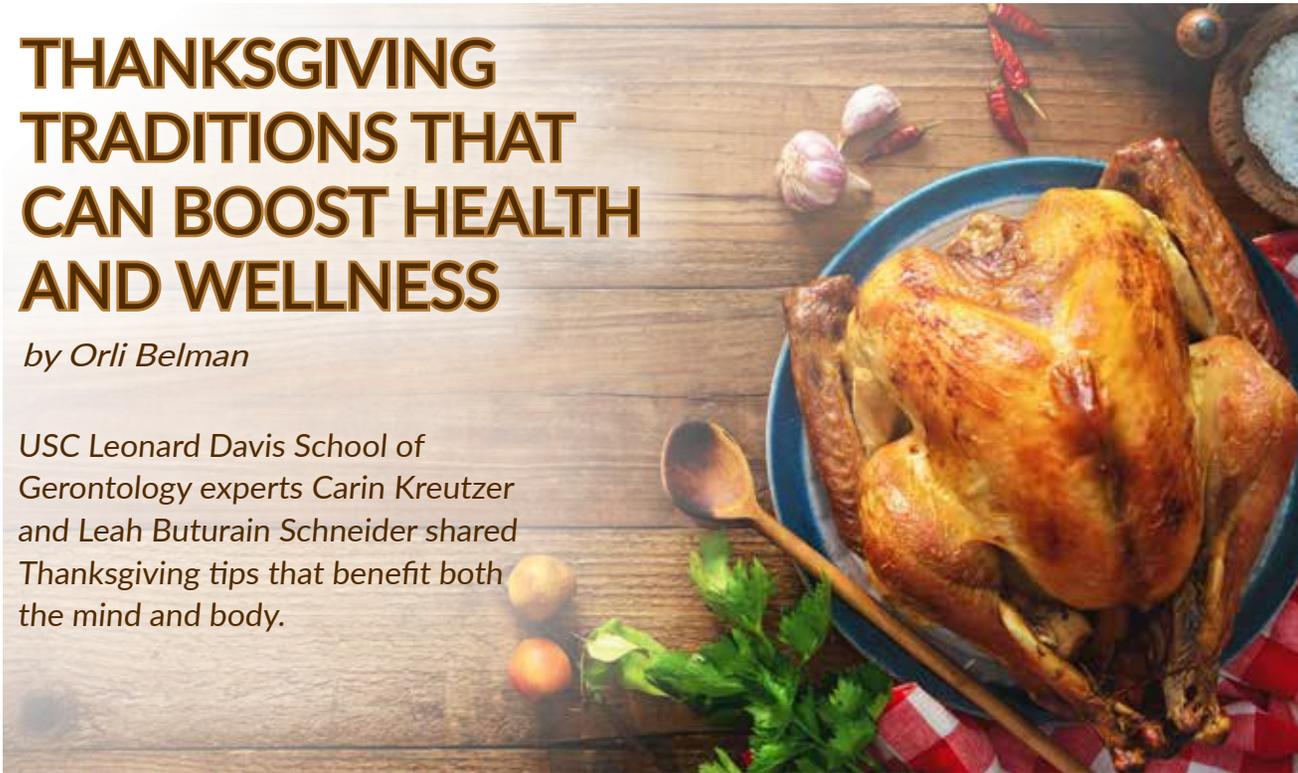


## THANKSGIVING TRADITIONS THAT CAN BOOST HEALTH AND WELLNESS

by Orli Belman

USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology experts Carin Kreutzer and Leah Buturain Schneider shared Thanksgiving tips that benefit both the mind and body.



### Mind: Give thanks.

Gratitude is good for you. Research shows it can lower blood pressure, decrease depression and improve quality of life. “Gratitude works,” said Buturain Schneider, a gerontologist, theologian and mindful aging expert at USC. But gratitude is not a feeling, it is a behavior we can practice every day of the year, she said.

### Serve up strong relationships

Social isolation has recently been cited as possibly being more harmful to health than smoking or obesity. Despite the headaches of travel and stress that family dynamics can bring, Thanksgiving helps build community by encouraging shared experiences with family and friends, or even welcoming strangers.

“Until age 80, most people say they want to be healthy. After 80, people say what matters most is relationships,” Buturain Schneider said. “The Thanksgiving holiday is a powerful reminder of how coming together to share a meal can provide a sense of fellowship and belonging that many people, particularly older adults, are missing in their lives.”

“

We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.

- John F. Kennedy

”

### A Thankful Thanksgiving Book Recommendation

*365 Thank Yous: The Year a Simple Act of Daily Gratitude Changed My Life*

by  
John Kralik

*365 Thank Yous* is a rare memoir, its touching message delivered in the plainspoken storytelling of an ordinary man. Kralik sets a believable, doable example of how to live a good life. To read *365 Thank Yous* is to be changed.

## Extend a helping hand

Many homeless shelters and retirement communities are inundated with individuals who sign up to serve meals on Thanksgiving. And like gratitude, research shows that helping others can bring health benefits to the giver.

## Body: Make lunch your largest meal

Research increasingly shows that it is not just what we eat, but when we eat that matters. Many families eat their Thanksgiving meal in the afternoon, not in the evening, and that is a step in the right direction for all days, said dietitian Kreutzer, director of the Master of Science in Nutrition, Healthspan, and Longevity program at the USC Leonard Davis School.

“Our bodies are more efficient at burning calories during the day when we are active versus storing excess calories as fat at night while we sleep. Front-loading calories gives you time to digest all those calories well before bedtime, which can have benefits for weight loss and overall health, including controlling weight and managing and preventing diabetes and obesity.”

## Move after meals

From local Turkey trots to family flag football games, Thanksgiving offers annual opportunities to exercise. Along with maintaining a healthy diet, moderate daily activity is a proven intervention that can reduce risk for a variety of diseases, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and Alzheimer’s.

## Leave some leftovers

Some people actually prefer Friday’s turkey sandwich to Thursday’s main meal. Whatever your choice, it’s important to spread the bounty. Practicing portion control at every meal helps ensure we don’t eat too much in one sitting.

“When it comes to protein, three to four ounces is enough for most people,” Kreutzer said. “Saving food for the next few days allows you to enjoy the meal multiple times and spares you from taking in too many calories at once.”



### Did You Know?

Harry Truman is often credited with being the first president to pardon a turkey, but that’s not quite true. He was the first to receive a ceremonial turkey from the National Turkey Federation – and he had it for dinner. John F. Kennedy was the first to let a Thanksgiving turkey go, followed by Richard Nixon who sent his turkey to a petting zoo. George H.W. Bush is the president who formalized the turkey pardoning tradition in 1989.

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## November is National Peanut Butter Lovers Month!

### Show Your Love with this Healthy Peanut Butter Fudge Recipe



#### INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup peanut butter  
1 overripe banana OR 2/3 cup coconut butter  
1 tsp pure vanilla extract  
1/16 tsp salt  
2 tbsp coconut butter  
pinch uncut stevia OR 2 tbsp powdered sugar  
OR pure maple syrup

#### DIRECTIONS:

If peanut butter is not stir-able, gently heat until you are able to easily stir it. Either combine all ingredients in a small blender until completely smooth, OR mash the banana and stir together ingredients very patiently by hand until completely smooth. Scoop into a small plastic container OR parchment-lined glass container OR candy molds OR mini cupcake liners. (You have options!) Freeze until firm. Due to the melty nature of coconut, this fudge is best stored in the freezer.