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Mercer Island REPORTER

Plan Thanksgiving with Internet recipes

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Special to the Reporter



When I was growing up, Thanksgiving was the most festive of family holidays. It was the only time of the year that my mother roasted a whole turkey. She was always so full of energy on those cold and blustery Thanksgiving mornings. But, by the end of the day, she was truly exhausted.

Spending the day in the kitchen was a production. It started at 6 a.m., because Tom the Turkey took a long time to cook. Mom would always talk to her bird and would call us into the kitchen to share this comical experience. She was so entertaining and made up such grand ``turkey yard'' stories that we became enchanted with how this special bird came to our kitchen. I look back now on her imagination and think about how wonderful it would have been to be able to record this for a children's story book. We delighted in her tales, enjoyed her songs and had the best of Thanksgiving feasts.

What I remember is that I never helped with any preparation in the kitchen. Mom always said that I had the rest of my life to be in the kitchen, so why start now! She managed to do it all by herself, but paid the price of exhaustion for many days afterwards. Probably that is why she insisted that we go out to eat when she got older! We did as she asked because it made her so happy not to cook for anymore Thanksgivings. That's when I took her up on her words that my time will come to take over this daunting task.

The best gift from my mother-in-law was that she let her sons help in the kitchen. So being tired from producing a feast is now a shared marital activity. My secret for a successful dinner is to have everyone bring something, preferably a side dish to share with our now large and growing family. I cook a kosher turkey and with the help of my husband Dave, get it into the oven minus the fanfare that reminded me of my childhood. This is when I miss my mom the most as she brought such a life to the party!

I went on the Internet to find some Thanksgiving recipes, some new and different and others traditional. At www.tastycrockpotrecipes.net/recipes2/article1111.html. I found Crockpot Turkey stuffing. I was trying to think of



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a way to make the stuffing and not use my ovens. What a clever idea this turned out to be as here was a great way to use my large Crockpot. The recipes notes, that it serves 12, but with so many side dishes, doubling it would just be too much! I found this site filled with ideas to make life a little easier, and recipes galore, from Crockpot Lime Salsa Chicken to Crockpot Apple Cider. After viewing 6 pages of a long list of recipes from this site, I will now remember to use my crockpot more often.

CROCKPOT TURKEY STUFFING

1 cup non-dairy margarine (I use less)

2 cups chopped onion

2 cups chopped celery

1/4 cup parsley sprigs (I like a bit more)

2 8-ounce cans mushrooms (you can substitute 1 pound fresh)

12 cups bread cubes, day old

1 teaspoon poultry seasoning

2 eggs, well-beaten

1 1/2 teaspoon sage

1 teaspoon thyme

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder (I use more and even sauté fresh garlic)

3 1/2 cups chicken or turkey broth (you can use vegetable broth)

(I also add in grated carrots and even sauté some hash browns too and add into the mixture)

Melt the margarine in a skillet and sauté onion, celery, parsley and mushrooms. In another skillet sauté the hash browns. Combine in a large bowl (Giant Tupperware gets used now) and pour the bread cubes on top. Add all the seasonings and toss well. Pour enough broth to moisten. Add eggs and mix well. Pack lightly into a slow cooker.

Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours.

For wonderfully easy recipes, try www.cdktichen.com and then search for Thanksgiving Recipes. CD Kitchen's home page covers links to everything from Copy Cat recipes to kids recipes. When I searched for Thanksgiving I

was able to pull up Side Dishes, Desserts, Leftovers and Traditional entrée recipes, as well as Alternative recipes. I even discovered Sugar-free Thanksgiving recipes. One delicious side dish is Smashed Sweet Potatoes. I found it at www.cdkitchen.com/recipes/si/potat/si-potat077.shtml. This recipe serves 6, so double for a crowd. I wouldn't double the bourbon though, but instead add an extra 1/6 cup.

SMASHED SWEET POTATOES

3 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes (substitute yams if desired)

3/4 cup brown sugar

juice and grated rind of one orange

1/3 cup bourbon

1/4 cup margarine

1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Mini marshmallows (optional)

Boil sweet potatoes or yams until tender. Peel and mash until lumps are gone. Add brown sugar, orange juice and rind, bourbon, margarine and pumpkin pie spice. Mix well. Spread into a shallow dish (casserole or 10-inch deep dish pie plate). Bake 30 minutes in a 350 degree oven. Top with marshmallows if desired and broil very briefly. I don't use the marshmallows as I think its sweet enough and with the bourbon there is enough flavors.

I went onto the Web to search for a site that speaks about support of Washington products and discovered www.heartofwashington.com. Click in and read about how Washington commodities have made an impact on our state's economy. You will see a photo of Kathy Casey on this site. I clicked under her picture and came up with some wonderful holiday recipes. Clicked again under ``vinaigrette" and pulled up a cranberry recipe that sounded so delicious and easy to make.

CRANBERRY VINAIGRETTE

Makes 1 1/2 cups

2/3 cup fresh or frozen cranberries

1/4 cup sugar

1/2 cup white wine or distilled vinegar

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1/4 cup orange juice

3/4 cup vegetable oil or very light olive oil

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place the cranberries, sugar and vinegar in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat until cranberries pop, about 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool. Puree the cranberry mixture in a blender. Pour the puree into a medium bowl and whisk in oil, a little at a time. The salad dressing should become smooth and emulsified. Season with salt and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to use.

If you really a stymied about cooking for Thanksgiving go to the Fine Cooking Magazine site. Click into www.taunton.com/finecooking/pages/c00129.asp. Find their home page also as it gives a round-up of holiday recipes that even includes a video on how to wrap a Mousse cake with an elegant chocolate band! Here you will find lots of instructions and menus to go along with recipes. Look up Orange--Soaked Bundt Cake; it's a grand holiday dessert. Besides, with a name like Fine Cooking Magazine, how can you possibly go wrong!

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