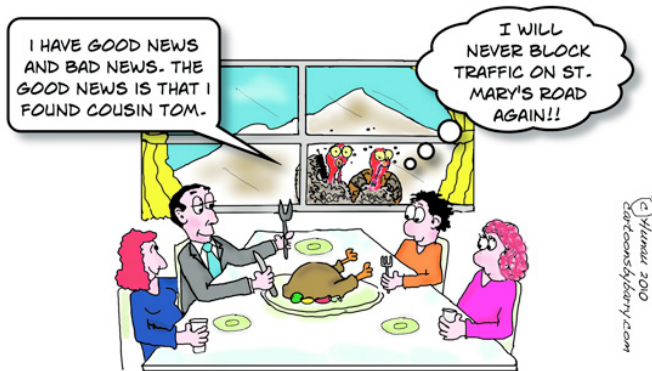


Published November 24, 2010

Twisted Turkey Traditions

By Lou Fancher



Have A Happy Lamorinda Thanksgiving Barry Hunau

butter. But cooked? The mushy, fibrous wedges, despite my filtering, would somehow find their way into my mouth. Spitting wasn't an option, so I resorted to a gagging sound, followed by a rapid infusion of milk, which usually earned me a stern "Louise!" from my otherwise easy-going father.

But one year, as dad delivered a portion of turkey onto my plate, the meat slipped and submerged itself in my glass of milk. Mysteriously mortified in front of visiting relatives, he shushed me. To my great delight, I was allowed to refuse the celery-laced stuffing a few minutes later: thus leaving my milk intact, the turkey hidden, and my father's slip, undiscovered.

Stuffing also prompted an embarrassing moment when I became a parent. My son, about 5 years old, entered the kitchen, just as my husband was exploring the inner cavities of our bird. "Mom! Mom!" he cried in dismay, "Dad has his hand stuck in the turkey's butt! Come help!" While that was a funny moment, his insistence on repeated retellings of the story, at full volume, whenever and wherever the occasion suited him, was less amusing.

As Thanksgiving approached, I began to worry that my memories and family traditions placed me in an odd, freakish category. As usual, I turned to the internet for comfort. Here is what I found:

Most Frightening Turkey Recipe

Deep fried turkey*, which requires gallons of peanut oil, and a very, very large stockpot, is frightening on many levels. If you don't burn yourself on all that boiling oil, the saturated fat content may send your cholesterol levels to the moon (although there seems to be some disagreement on the actual fat content of a deep fried turkey.) Most Frightening Turkey Substitute

This is a full category, with Tofurky Roast and Quorn, a substance made from mycoprotein and entirely free of meat or soy, both earning blue ribbons on the "that's just gross" scale.

Most Ridiculous Idea on Which to Build Your Thanksgiving Traditions

Plan the menu according to your guests' astrological sign. Apparently, Gemini's must have Orange-Pomegranate Relish, Virgos must have Corn Bread Stuffing, and forget even inviting a Taurus if you're not serving candied yams.

New Trends in Stuffing

Quinoa, brandy, pineapple, pitted Kalamata olives, cage-free eggs, and chopped chicken livers. (Not all in the same recipe, please.)

Thanksgiving amplifies the oddest quirks of the American family. Glorifying our love affair with bountiful buffets-consumed in preparation for watching televised sports to excess-the holiday is prime territory for peculiar, even perverse traditions.

My own fondest memories were formed early on. After gorging for hours, my three sisters and I would lie, like four Midwestern sardines, close together on the living room floor. Mom, or less often, dad, would shoot pictures to show our bellies, rising like miniature Mount Diablo's from underneath our shirts. Our stomachs' altitude was proof of the good meal they'd provided.

Although there are no photos to help me recall the process, making stuffing is stamped just as irrevocably on my Thanksgiving Day mind. Again, the four of us would join forces: wadding soft, fluffy Wonder White Bread into balls, stuffing our cheeks to bursting and laughing hysterically as we began to resemble chipmunks, more than girls.

I might have loved stuffing, for all the fun it generated, if it wasn't for the Family Recipe. My mother would take a perfectly delicious blend of bread, spices and butter, and ruin the entire thing with just a few stalks of celery. I even liked celery-raw and filled with peanut

Silliest Turkey Trivia to Share at Dinner

Turkeys have excellent hearing, but no ears, and, older male turkeys are the best: young turkeys are "stringy," and females are "tough." (We women always knew that was the case.)

The Highs and Lows of Leftovers

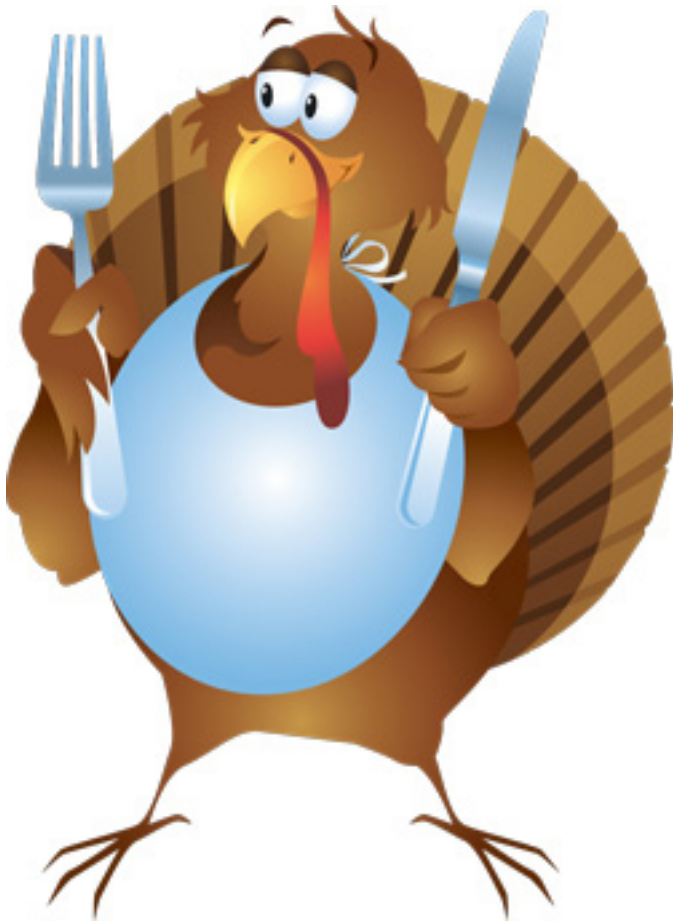
Turkey pot pies, Cranberry-Turkey Enchiladas, Turkey-Noodle Casserole with Potato Chip Crust, Turkey Cobb Salad, and the all-time classic, Turkey Sandwich.

Sign Indicating You Have No Life and Can Hardly Claim to be an American

You visit Martha Stewart's Turkey Trivia page, take the 9 question quiz, and fail.

So, after all, I do fit in. I know that turkeys can fly, I know that if Benjamin Franklin had had his way, we'd all be eating bald eagles come November, and most importantly, I know where celery does, and does not, belong.

*Frying a turkey this holiday season? The Bay Area Pollution Prevention Group would like to remind residents not to pour leftover grease and cooking oil down sinks and drains. Doing so causes sewer system back-ups. Check out BayWise.org for a list of free fat, oil and grease drop-off locations around the Bay Area. Now there's a Turkey tradition we've yet to explore: working the oil drop-off desk on Black Friday.



Turkey

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