



*The  
Thanksgiving  
Table*

*A compilation of writings  
about a wonderful holiday*

*Edited by: Gigi Ross*

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### *About This Book*

*The Thanksgiving Table is a collection of writings that were submitted as part of a blog contest on my blog, KludgyMom. The contributors, and their submissions, are as diverse as the ways in which people celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday.*

*The Thanksgiving Table is divided into three sections: Recipes, Crafts and Activities, Thanksgiving Humor and Thanksgiving Reflections.*

*There are wonderful stories and ideas in the book. I'm sure you'll find many treasures. Please enjoy it, and support the blogs of the contributors.*

*Happy Holidays,*

*Gigi Ross, Editor (KludgyMom)*

# Contributors

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Alexandra of Good Day, Regular People

Lori of In Pursuit of Martha Points

Erin of I'm Gonna Kill Him

Liz of A Belle, A Bean and a Chicago Dog

Kristin of Taming Insanity

Kayleen of The Adventures of Chip and Bobo

Joann of Laundry Hurts My Feelings

Kelley of Kelley's Break Room

Missy of Wonder, Friend

Christina of A Closet Writer

Morgan of A Little Hen House

Jane of Sweet Basil Kitchen

Alex of A Moderate Life

Deidre of JDaniel4's Mom

Jennifer of Midwest Momments

Larissa of Trendy Mamas

Jill of Single Mom on a Budget

Rhonda of Motivation Mama Drama

Amy of Eat.Live.Laugh.Shop.

Alicia of A Beautiful Mess

Natalie of My Wonderfully Crazy Life

Jessica of My Simply Complicated

Joey of Big Teeth and Clouds

Sara of Tedious Life

Momma of MommaKiss

Yuliya of She Suggests

Recipes,

Crafts and

Ideas

# After Thanksgiving Dinner Walk Activities

*By Deidre of JDaniel4's Mom*

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When I was little, my family used to go for a walk after eating Thanksgiving dinner. If a walk is in your Thanksgiving plans, here are two activities I found that you could do during your walk.

**Paint Sample Search**- Everyone is given a paint sample card and has to try and locate at least one thing on the walk that matches one of the colors on their card. If you don't have paint samples, you could have everyone grab three or four crayons and try to find things that match their crayons.



**First Initial Search**- Everyone tries to find five things on the walk that begin with the same letter as their first name. If you have several people with the same first letter, you could use middle names.



*Deidre writes about reflections about her life as the mom of JDaniel. [Visit her blog!](#)*

# Turkey Hash Recipe

*By Alicia of A Beautiful Mess*

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Growing up Thanksgiving meant lots of traditional yummy foods (Turkey, Potatoes, Stuffing, Yams, Rolls, Pumpkin Pie, etc.) and lots of family. Usually a dozen+ extra people there was no room for as well. That's just the way my folks rolled. What's a few more potatoes? But that's not what comes to mind when I think of Thanksgiving. In the last 18 years of marriage hubs has been gone or working for more Thanksgivings than he's been around for. True. And although I've tried to make most of the same foods, it just never had the same flair from my childhood days.

But what remains a constant. A favorite. And has never failed me yet is Turkey Hash. It's the one perfect tradition. Yummy now. Or freeze and heat up later.



It is a perfect recipe for sickos as well. A great chicken noodle soup substitute.

So, how does one make Turkey Hash you ask?

That's the best part. There are no rules. Just throw a bunch of stuff together and heat it up. Use the portions you want. Make it as thick or thin as you like. Grab some bread or crackers and you have yourself one heck of a yummy meal. And great leftovers.





Nicer tableware optional.

These are the ingredients that we added to the pot:

**Left over turkey (shredded)**

**Diced Potatoes (any amount you like)**

**Drippings, left over gravy, or chicken broth**

**Water if needed**

**Diced Onions**

**Salt and Pepper**

**And whatever else your heart desires**

Throw it in a pot and cook until potatoes are to the desired consistency.

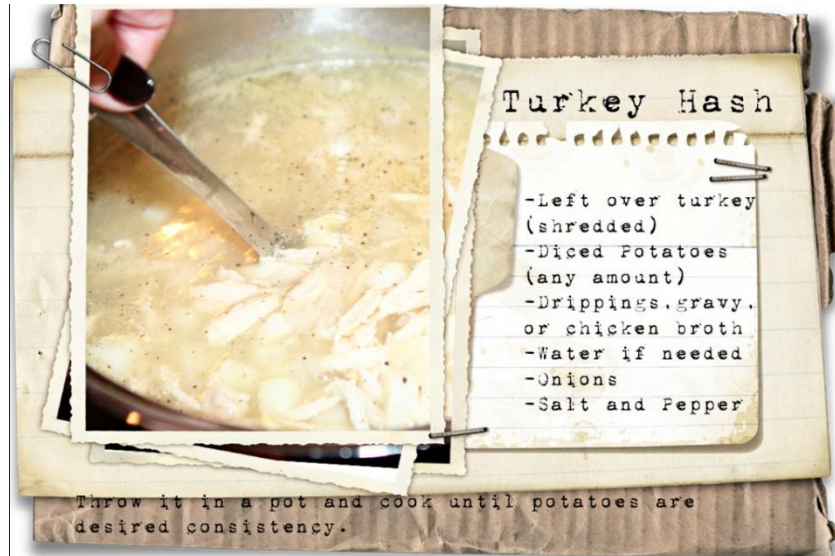


It's like a mixture of a thin potato soup and chicken noodle soup minus the chicken and noodles. DELISH!! On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being the hardest, it's about a 2. And only because it does involve some chopping. But on the up side, it's an easy way to burn a few extra calories.



On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being the yummiest? Definitely a 10.

And here's a card for the taking. Just in case you can't remember those 4 or 5 ingredients. Right click and save as an image and print it out on cardstock or photo paper.



Alicia shares more of her stories at [A Beautiful Mess](#).

# Sweet Potato Souffle Recipe

*by Jill of Single Mom On A Budget*

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A few years ago a friend of mine asked the boys and I to join his family for Thanksgiving dinner, which he was hosting at his house. His whole family. Translation: Please help me cook. I was cool with it because I love cooking Thanksgiving dishes. LOVE it.

He asked me what I would be making and for a list of items he needed to get at the store. My list of dishes included things like turkey, ham, green bean casserole, sweet potato souffle, mashed potatoes and pumpkin pie.

Errrrtt... "Sweet potato what?" he said. "Sweet potato *soo-flay*," I said. He said, "I don't think you understand my family. They won't eat strange things." I assured him that it isn't strange and that his family would LOVE it. I also retreated a bit and promised to forgo the souffle part and do the brown sugar topping instead. He was reluctant, but finally agreed.



Fast forward to Thanksgiving day. He was right, his entire family was suspicious. Really? This beautiful pile of brown sugar? It was like pulling teeth, but once I got one of them to try it and gush the rest of them followed. (Told ya so.) After dinner his entire family thanked me and told me that it was the best Thanksgiving dinner they had ever had. Especially the sweet potato *soo-flay*.

## **Sweet Potato Souffle Recipe**

This recipe will fit a 1 1/2 quart baking dish. For a full 13×9, double the recipe.

### **Ingredients:**

- 3 lbs sweet potatoes, cooked and mashed
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 stick of butter, softened
- 1/4 cup orange juice (preferably from a fresh orange)
- 1/4 cup lemon juice (lemon juice is fine)
- 1 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)
- 4 oz pralines (optional)

### **For brown sugar topping:**

- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 stick of butter, softened
- 1/2 cup self rising flour (regular flour works too)
- 1/2 cup chopped pecans

### **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix sweet potatoes, brown sugar, butter, orange juice, lemon juice, cinnamon, nutmeg and salt. Stir until smooth. Add eggs. Stir until smooth. Add chopped pecans and pralines, stir until mixed well.

Pour mixture in baking dish. Prepare topping by mixing all ingredients until it becomes crumbly. Sprinkle over sweet potato mixture.

Bake at 350° for 25 minutes. If brown sugar begins to brown too fast, cover with aluminum foil.

### **ALTERNATIVE TOPPING – the soo-flay part:**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 2 egg whites
- 1 1/2 cup sugar

**Directions:**

Bake sweet potato mixture as indicated above (without brown sugar topping, of course).  
Remove sweet potatoes from oven.

Set oven to broil. Beat egg whites really well. Add sugar and beat until mixture forms stiff peaks.

Spoon egg/sugar mixture over the sweet potatoes and broil for approximately 7 minutes, or until fully cooked and browned. (This part can be tricky.)

*Jill writes a blog at [Single Mom On A Budget](#).*

# Loaf Cake Recipe

*By Larissa of Trendy Mamas*

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The time for giving thanks is upon us once again. With the extra pounds put on by many from the Halloween candy, expertly pilfered from their children's hard work, or those put on for their "winter coats" to help fight off Jack Frost, many people are looking to begin anew the "battle of the bulge". As evidence of this, there are many places where you can find fat free, low sodium, low calorie, and healthy alternatives to our traditional Thanksgiving favorites. **Don't give in to this temptation.**

Thanksgiving is about family, friends, football and food. Although other holidays have traditional foods incorporated in to their celebrations Thanksgiving is the one holiday recognized as a day of feasting, culminating in the loosening of one's belt, napping and returning for more. This is the one holiday where you should eat the food you want, without compromise and be thankful for it.

Don't swap mashed cauliflower for mashed potatoes and gravy. Don't skimp on the butter, or cut back on the sugar in effort to cut back on the intake of fat and calories. If you want to cut back through the holidays give up some of the Christmas cookies, drink a few less glasses of eggnog and stay out of your kids Halloween candy. Don't forget Thanksgiving, although a holiday for being thankful about the blessings we each have, is about the food. Although I have a lot to be thankful for, and I am, my memories are of the delicious food served during this day of thanks. The week before I am already salivating like Pavlov's dogs at the sound of bell.

Along these lines I have included the recipe of a family favorite. Although not the traditional pumpkin pie you usually find on a Thanksgiving table it has been a tradition in my family for years. Usually it was found between the pumpkin and pecan pies and was a great way to end a Thanksgiving feast. Eat and eat some more and give thanks that it's only once a year.

## **Loaf Cake**

- 2 Sticks of Margarine
- ½ Cup of Crisco
- 3 Cups of Sugar
- 5 Eggs
- 3 Cups of Flour
- ½ Teaspoon of Salt
- ½ Teaspoon of Baking Powder
- 1 ¼ Cup of Milk
- 2 Teaspoons of Vanilla

Mix Crisco, margarine and sugar together until real light.

Add the eggs, one at a time and beat for about 2 minutes.

Sift flour and salt

Add flour, salt, baking powder, milk and vanilla to creamed margarine.

Beat well.

Flour 6" layer pan. (Makes three layers)

Pour mix into pan and bake 1 hr 350-375

Allow to cool. While still slightly warm, lay out first layer and ice evenly. Add next layer and repeat. Do the same for the third. For best results allow icing to firm, usually overnight.

### **Caramel Icing**

2 boxes of brown sugar  
2 sticks of margarine  
2 cups of evaporated milk

Cook slowly until it forms a soft ball in ½ cup of coldwater or use a cooking thermometer and heat to soft ball temp. Beat until it begins to thicken and ice the cake as directed above. Be sure the icing has thickened well before placing on the sides of the cake as it is heavy and will not set well unless properly thickened.

If icing is too sweet for your tastes then bake the cake in a Bundt cake pan and make only half of the icing and drizzle it over the cake to taste.

*Larissa is a freelance web designer ([www.bloomwebstudio.com](http://www.bloomwebstudio.com)), and mother based in beautiful New England. She blogs at [TrendyMamas.com](http://TrendyMamas.com).*



# Butternut Squash Whole Wheat Dinner Rolls

*By Jane of Sweet Basil Kitchen*

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I'll admit, I am on a roll with butternut squash! I think it is one of the most versatile vegetables there is. From pizza, to salad, to ravioli, to bread to just roasted in the oven, it is hands down my favorite vegetable. We are coming into the prime season for this prize. In fact, last week I purchased two large butternut squash at our Farmer's Market for \$1!

In my mixer I started with 2. c. warm water. To this I added 2 T. yeast, 2 egg yolks, 1/3 c. date syrup, one cup butternut squash puree and 1/3 c. olive oil.



Start mixing on low speed and gradually add the salt, and flour. I used mostly whole wheat flour, except for about 2 c. unbleached. Add flour and knead with dough hooks until mixture starts to pull away from the bowl. Continue kneading on low speed for another 5 minutes.

Remove from bowl and transfer to an oiled mixing bowl. Turn dough to coat all sides.

Cover and let rise in warm place until double. I turn my oven on and just as the coils start to color, I turn off the oven and then place the bowl of dough in the oven. In 30 minutes the dough looked like this. Notice, I pushed in with my finger to see if it was ready.

With oiled hands, take large handful of dough and spread into 12-14" circle. I do this on my Silpat so it doesn't stick to the counter.

Using pizza cutter, cut into wedges. Roll up starting with the wide edge.



Place on oiled cookie sheet and brush with egg white and water mixture. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and return to warm oven until doubled in size. (about 20-30 minutes)

Bake in 350 oven for 20-25 minutes, until light golden brown.



*Jane has a lovely cooking blog called [Sweet Basil Kitchen](#).*

# Sweet Potato Recipe

*By Natalie of My Wonderfully Crazy Life*

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In many ways, this Thanksgiving will be like every other Thanksgiving. My family will get together, eat food, watch football & catch up on what we've been missing from each other's lives. Kids will run through the house while parents tell them to stop. I'm sure someone will get upset and voices will be raised. After the meal, belts will be loosened. I'm positive I will be able to find more than one relative napping in various parts of the house.

Something will be different this year though. One of us sick and is fighting for her life. Although the prognosis is good, it is still going to be a battle. A battle that means weekly treatments that make you sick. A fact that to get better, she will lose her hair and will most likely wish she could just give up.



So this Thanksgiving I will celebrate with my family like always in the most traditional ways with the knowledge that time is precious. We shouldn't take each other for granted because nothing is guaranteed. And for right now, knowing we are all together is the best thing I have to be thankful for.

And in honor of my aunt AND Thanksgiving, here is her

### ***Famous Sweet Potato Recipe***

Ingredients:

5 -6 sweet potatoes

1/2 cup white sugar

1/2 cup butter

2 eggs, beaten

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping:

1/3 cup melted butter

1 cup light brown sugar

1/2 cup flour

1 cup chopped pecans

Directions:

Boil and mash potatoes

Mix in sugar, butter, eggs, vanilla and milk.

Put in a 13x9 inch baking dish.

For the topping melt butter and mix in remaining ingredients.

Sprinkle on top of the potato mixture.

Bake 25 minutes at 350 degrees.



*Natalie chronicles her parenting moments at [It's a Wonderfully Crazy Life](#).*

# After Thanksgiving Sandwich

*By Alex of A Moderate Life*

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I am not exactly sure why Thanksgiving became my favorite holiday, but hands down it is. I guess upon thinking on it, it is a bit strange, considering both of my parents did not come to America until they were adults as immigrants seeking occupation in the medical field. My dad's journey, as a Greek boy who grew up in China, becoming a doctor in his travels through Vietnam and France was longer than my mother's who simply hopped over the pond with all her hopes and dreams and a degree in nursing and midwifery.

I distinctly remember, even at a very young age, my parents embracing their new country with great joy and expectation. They made every effort to assimilate, and even if my mother continued to cook the old fashioned traditional recipes of her country (think steak and kidney pie and tripe!), the Thanksgiving holiday was one of the places she made a huge effort to do as the Joneses were doing.

One of my strongest memories of Thanksgiving was the fact that my dad, as an orthopedic surgeon, second in line at a practice always had to work on the holiday, no questions asked. We would eat much later than most families because of this, and my father, in his always magnanimous and generous nature would invite any intern or resident who was on call in the emergency room to come and sit at our family table for the meal. I loved meeting new people and hearing their stories, which were highly encouraged to be shared, as we all knew these young doctors were tender and a bit sad for missing their families on the holiday. We all did our best to enliven the atmosphere and share our gratitude as the lively, powerful and boisterous family that we were.

One year, my mother got a huge turkey, as we were expecting our cousins as well as the possibility of extras at the big dining room table and the overflowing kiddy table in the breakfast room. When she finally got it prepped, in the wee hours of the morning, she tried to slide it in the oven, but even with all but the lowest rack removed, the turkey was too big. She had a moment of tears and then, using her medical training and advice from my bone doctor father (who never EVER carved any meat in our house, his rational? He only carved live meat!), she broke the back of the turkey and used a kitchen chair to wedge the oven door closed. Always resourceful, my parents taught me to be so as well.

Every year, my mother and sister would pick the turkey carcass clean and slip it into the stock pot to begin the process of the after Thanksgiving turkey soup. My mother was a child of the depression and the War in England and so nothing EVER went to waste. For years, we ate turkey variations for days after the holiday until one year, my father finally put his foot down and said no more. My mother hasn't made turkey soup in years!

Even with all the turkey soup, and reheated turkey in gravy (yeck, turkey doesn't really reheat well does it?), and stuffing balls and hard boiled eggs wrapped in stuffing and deep fried (think scotch eggs for the frugal), there is one thing we never had. It is the one thing that I now crave ALL year and it is the one thing that I never even knew existed until I met my husband and became part of his huge family. That my parents didn't know about it, does not surprise me, as they did not grow up here, and never went to their friend's homes the day after Thanksgiving as kids or teens to share in the left over feast. Yes, my friends, I am speaking about the most beloved thing on the planet, that comes around only once a year and is more anticipated than Christmas by me. That is, the After Thanksgiving Turkey Sandwich!

A Thanksgiving Sandwich is one of the most personal and highly customizable edibles. Some families have a strict recipe, others, like my own clan are more flexible. To say that I cook FAR too much food on Thanksgiving is an understatement. I cook probably twice as much as we need, so we can be in Thanksgiving Leftover Turkey Sandwiches for at least a week.

When I sit down, after pondering my ingredients, and lovingly preparing this most beloved of all repasts, and take my first bite, the joy of the holiday, the gratitude for those I shared it with, the feeling of accomplishment for a family gathering completed and done right, all wash over me. I am at peace, I am complete, I am in Turkey sandwich heaven. My family knows not to bother me at all in this moment of complete immersion of all things Thanksgiving. It is rather zen!

Oh joy!



### **After Thanksgiving Left Over Turkey Sandwiches**

Can't tell you how much this serves because it is all based on what you have left over. If you love this as much as I do, you will make tons of extra!

Sliced or shredded light and dark meat turkey

Stuffing according to your own family recipe-the in turkey stuffing works best in these sandwiches because it is moist, so this always goes first, but pan stuffing can work too if you moisten it before storing with a bit of turkey or chicken stock.



Cranberry Relish or Cranberry Sauce according to your own family recipe

Mashed Potatoes or other mashed vegetables (optional-purists include it. I don't)

Warmed turkey gravy according to your own family recipe (optional-again a purist thing for dipping the sandwich in)

Good whole grain bread. We like Amish whole wheat potato bread but Deli Kaiser rolls work well here. Use whatever bread is going to bring you the most satisfaction and joy. This is all about feeding your soul!

Mayonaise or Butter according to your preference.

Ask everyone to come into the kitchen and fix their sandwich the way they want to, honoring the personal freedom that is the hallmark of America! Plus, you worked so hard the day before fixing food for your family, they can take care of themselves today!

So, this year, when cooking up a storm for Thanksgiving, consider the day after and how much joy it could bring you, and I am not talking about Christmas shopping and college football!

You can read more of Alex at her blog, [A Moderate Life](#) .

# Turkey Cookies

*By Amy of Eat.Live.Laugh.Shop.*

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We started a new Thanksgiving tradition last year which I plan to carry forward for years to come. I am not a crafty lady, but I do love to bake {and eat}. The problem is so much of Thanksgiving cooking and baking does not really involve the kids in a fun or meaningful way.

My Thanksgiving kitchen is a bevy of activity, but not one in which my children flourish. I truly wanted to include them in the preparations somehow and finally decided we would have to do what we do best -- cookies! But for Thanksgiving, turkey cookies.

First you trace one of each of your children's hand on cardboard or poster board (just something heavy for it will not rip over the years). When you are tracing his or her hand think "turkey hands" -- with the fingers spread a bit apart and the thumb up. And if you have two children do one left hand and one right hand so you can tell whose is whose (if you have more than two children, God bless you, this is the least of your worries). Then cut out each hand and label with their name or initials and date it.



We then use the newly created "cookie cutters" or templates to make Thanksgiving cookies for the kids' desserts (I may eat one or two as well). Just place the template on rolled-out sugar cookie dough (use your favorite recipe or buy the roll of dough from the grocery store) and carefully cut around the form with a knife. The dough is very forgiving so don't worry if it doesn't look perfect at this point. Place the cookies on a sheet pan and bake as instructed. Obviously, the resulting cookie is larger than your darling wee one's bitty hand, but over the years, pulling out that same form will bring back memories of how quickly time passes.

After they have cooled the kids' creativity can blossom. I made a super simple frosting consisting of mounds of powdered sugar, a dash of almond extract and a splash of milk. After creating the right consistency by slowly adding dribbles of milk, I divided it among small bowls and let the kids create a variety of colors from which to choose.



We enjoyed a wonderful afternoon together and the kids were quite pleased with their creations.



I am so incredibly blessed and thankful for these days together and the memories we create!

Amy blogs at [Eat.Live.Laugh.Shop](http://Eat.Live.Laugh.Shop).

# Homemade Christmas Ornaments

*By Jessica of My Simply Complicated*

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Our Thanksgiving traditions have changed a bit over the years. The holiday celebrations that I've enjoyed the most, however, are the ones that have been right here in our home.

The dynamics of Thanksgiving in this home just work for me. Some socialize in the kitchen near the food and others socialize in the living room near the TV watching football. We all manage to mingle together though, catching up on everything that's going on with each person.

*Catching up on the family gossip.* It never feels separate or too cramped for me – we find a happy medium.

Quite a few years back my mom started a very clever tradition. She slyly convinces everyone to set up her Christmas tree and decorate it for her, leaving her with a house completely decorated for the holiday season.

This tradition that she started at Thanksgiving didn't stop there. It wasn't a tradition that was created to leave my mother stress-free about decorations. This tradition is one that brought our family together. It brought out our creative sides, our humor, our *family time*.

The ornaments used to ornately decorate the Christmas tree that stands in our house year after year are ornaments that are handmade and from the heart. My mom prepares handmade ornaments a few days before Thanksgiving using a recipe handed down from my step-grandmother and then on Thanksgiving day, after our bellies are stuffed with turkey, stuffing, green beans, and all of the most amazing food in the world, we sit down for a fun afternoon of decorating.

This year, Thanksgiving dinner will be at our house again. This year, my mother is preparing handmade ornaments to decorate her Christmas tree. *This year, we will again bond over the most creative tradition I've known our family to have.*



{Photo from: PublicDomainPictures.net}

### **Homemade Ornaments**

1 c. salt  
2 c. flour  
1 c. water

Blend salt and flour. Add water slowly, a little at a time. Knead dough 7-10 minutes until firm.

Roll dough to about 1/4" thick. Use cookie cutters to cut out Christmas ornaments. Using a nail, make a hole in the top of each ornament for thread. Bake on a cookie sheet at 325° for 30 minutes. (Test for hardness.)

When cool, varnish to protect from moisture. Draw a design with white glue and sprinkle with glitter or decorate as desired. But, please, *do not eat*.

*Jessica writes her personal blog at [My Simply Complicated](#) and also operates a web design business, called [The Frilly Coconut](#).*

Thanksgiving  
Humor



# A Turkey Day Buffet

*By Joey of Big Teeth and Clouds*

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We didn't travel far for vacations when I was a kid. I've still never been west of Indiana and most of our amusements were found in the tri-state area (PA, WV and Ohio). My parents like to take us to Seven Springs in Champion, PA. We stayed in the hotel and swam in the indoor pool.

My very first memory is watching my own wet feet padding across the red tile floor of the lodge.

Seven Springs was a familiar, happy place for us. One year my parents decided we would spend Thanksgiving there. My sister's birthday is November 25th, so Jackie got to celebrate her birthday at the resort as well.

The memories of our vacations to this same spot have jumbled together in my mind, but that Thanksgiving always stands out. We'd been busy in the morning with bowling or swimming. By dinner I was starving. My dad and partner in crime was ravenous as well. I was always on his side and my sister stuck with Mom. We waited in line for a Thanksgiving buffet. Dad and I conspired to annoy the rest of the family.

Jackie was sour. She had a stomach ache.

The line inched forward. Dad and I could see a three tiered fancy serving dish with a beautiful green salad. My mouth watered.

Suddenly, Jackie coughed. She covered her mouth with her hands and took off running as fast as I've ever seen her move. My mom followed.

Jackie was throwing up in the restaurant.

Dad and I looked at one another, devastated. There would be no buffet for us. He snatched a few red ripe cherry tomatoes off of the gorgeous salad. I followed suit.

We packed up and headed for home. I snuggled into the far corner of my seat in the car, as far from my sick sister as possible. My hunger passed and two hours later we were home.

My mom still had to cook a Thanksgiving feast that weekend. Daddy wouldn't think of missing it. Though that was far from a pleasant holiday, it's the first one that comes to mind when I think of Thanksgiving. The four of us were together. My dad and I still talk about the time we stole those cherry tomatoes.

This Thanksgiving day my sister turns 37-years-old. I've never properly thanked her for all of the years she didn't ruin my dinner by losing her lunch. That is truly something to be thankful for!

*Joey blogs about her life at [Big Teeth and Clouds](#).*

# Pocahontas & John Smith: A Modern Day Love Story

*By Erin of I'm Gonna Kill Him*

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Thanksgiving of 1621 was nothing compared to the one of 2003. Sure, the Separatists on board the Mayflower faced some tribulations. They'd been driven out of England after years of religious persecution, forced to find spiritual haven in a new land. They boarded a ship and sailed across the stormy Atlantic for over two months. The Mayflower made landfall in Massachusetts, a far cry from the Virginia coast they'd intended. The Pilgrims, now reduced by half thanks to a brutal winter and an outbreak more rampant than any found aboard a Carnival Cruise, encountered the Wampanoag Indians at Plymouth. Eventually an accord was made and the harvest feast was shared between the natives and the new arrivals. And for dessert, the whites served up a hearty dose of non-indigenous viruses and seeds. Jump ahead some centennials to modern-times when the colonists had discovered New York City and much better clothing.

My now husband, G, and I had spent a whirlwind 6 months together before he decided to put a ring on it. It was shocking to everyone, especially to me, and bets were quietly exchanged by family and friends as to when we'd announce the arrival of our unplanned child. While we'd passed muster with each other's friends, we hadn't yet been introduced to the other's family. We had planned for G to fly west to meet my family at Christmas, but the presentation of the bride-to-be to the groom's family was slated for Thanksgiving.

I was nervous for myriad reasons. G's family is big, a precursor to the Gosselins and the Duggars, comprised of seven children helmed by his parents. Meeting any individual from your significant other's family can raise blood pressure, but meeting an entire Congressional hearing of them can induce a heart attack. I empathize with the nervousness the newcomers must have felt when confronted by a tribe of natives for I, too, had to worry about being scalped and made into a teepee. While the Indians traded barbs about the white folk's pointy shoes and large noses, the Pilgrims just nodded and smiled because they couldn't interpret the content of the discussion. I, on the other hand, would know exactly what my in-laws thought of my pedigree (bad) and intelligence (worse).

By the time we embarked on our journey up the New England coast to Maine, I was suffering something far worse than dysentery or scurvy. I had a scourge only a woman knows. If Dante's layers of hell included a 10th plane, it would be The Eternal Urinary Tract Infection. Anyone who has experienced the singular pain of urinating a fire-breathing dragon while sending up promises to do God's work on Earth can attest to the fact that epidurals should be available over-the-counter to women battling one of these beasts. I was dreading the long trip since my

condition left me seeking a bathroom every four and a half minutes, and I was certain G would call off the wedding if he saw me seated upon a portable potty chair in the passenger seat. Fighting holiday traffic over the George Washington Bridge took longer than the Pilgrims voyage at sea. I contemplated using the suicide phones positioned along the bridge railing more than once. As I squirmed in my seat somewhere along the path in Connecticut, G asked if I was excited to meet his family.

"Sure, sure, can't wait," I breathed while squeezing my legs together. "Your mom is probably a great cook. She never left the kitchen with seven of you."

G knew I was anxious about the dining situation since I have been a vegetarian most of my life, a fact which goes unexamined most days of the year but is met with an inordinate amount of questions and head-scratching on Thanksgiving. Everyone expects you to unseal your own Ziploc of Tofurkey right there at the table while throwing yourself upon the basted fowl centerpiece and tossing flaxseed at the others waiting to eat it.

As I imagined myself in more comfortable times, frolicking hand-in-hand with my non-inflamed bladder on a beach somewhere, G continued, "There's a ton of food; Plenty for you to eat. Potatoes, stuffing, green beans, bread. She even makes an artisanal cheese."

I hallucinated that he had said 'vaginal cream.'

"Cheese. Great," as sweat beaded on my forehead. "Let's just listen to the radio and be thankful for the Christmas music you're making me listen to the entire way."

"It's called Fromunda cheese. Family recipe."

"Yum." Visions of antibiotics danced in my head.

By the time we arrived, we had stopped exactly thirty four times so I could use the bathroom. I'd squatted in enough truck stops that a UTI was the least of my maladies, surely having picked up an exotic combination of staph and herpes somewhere in New Hampshire. Fortunately, my physician was tracked down at home by his emergency service who cited a highly unstable woman describing her symptoms as 'peeing Fire Sauce and jalepenos.' He had phoned in a prescription that we intercepted before arriving to the homestead. Like the new arrivals to Plymouth, I was relieved to have disembarked my vessel and I was ready to reap this harvest.

I had no shiny weapons, no furs or pelts, no spoils from our home to offer my native hosts, my dowry limited to a pile of American Express debt, but they welcomed me anyway. While I had trouble understanding every tribal Mainer I had encountered in the wild, I was able to converse freely with G's family. When they weren't squinting at my stomach, trying to ascertain whether I may be carrying a girl or boy, we enjoyed an easy and spirited interaction. As the horde of family members swarmed the appetizer table, there was talk of football, family, and the food to come. This spurred my recall of the cheese G had mentioned.

"I've heard all about the Fromunda cheese. I can't wait to try it," I told every sibling to cross my path. They would smile politely and focus on counting the holes in their Ritz crackers. I guessed I was going to have to wait to try to this special brand of Fromage. Perhaps it was reserved for dessert. As the big meal was consumed, I found myself in conversation with G's younger sister and her boyfriend. While the boyfriend and I had struck shore upon different ships, we were both strangers from a foreign land so we had to stick together. He had set foot upon their territory before so I thought to ask him if he'd tried the delectable Fromunda cheese.

His eyes squinted in confusion and G's sister, who had caught wind of the subject, elbowed her brother and said, "Did you tell her about Fromunda cheese," while releasing a snort.

G looked at me, eyes wild and mouth agape, and issued a frenzied whisper, "It's a joke, Erin. Fromunda cheese? I was just messing with you since you weren't listening to me in the car."

His sister and her boyfriend suppressed laughter as I inquired quietly after the meaning of Fromunda cheese. Like a finalist in the Spelling Bee, I needed to know the provenance of the word and if it could be used in a sentence.

"Fromunda. From Unda A Man's Balls."

That would have been the time, over pumpkin pie, to release a coughing fit of smallpox so to decimate the local population. The antibiotics coursing through my blood stream had left me clean as a whistle, though. No wonder all the paintings of the First Thanksgiving, the monumental harvest feast, depicted smiling and bread-breaking between the Natives and the Settlers. While serving up the Grouse, the Natives were saying in a language only they understood, "Look at the Whities eating all this food we had to hunt. Think they want some Fromunda cheese?? From Unda My Buckskin?" Laughter would erupt from the Indians as the Pilgrims looked at each other nervously and said, "That sounds lovely. Pass it over."

\*\*Please don't over-analyze my historical references. I attended high school in the Ozarks where my social studies teacher was called Coach Buckhog and taught us more about football plays than history.

*Erin can be found blogging at [I'm Gonna Kill Him](#) .*

# A Turkey Abroad

By Lori of *In Pursuit of Martha Points*

---

I lived in England with Husband and Son for 2 years while I worked for the National Health Service. Lots of fun. Wet. Cold. But fun. And with fish and chips. Win!

England doesn't celebrate Thanksgiving. First, no Native Americans there for the requisite Thanksgiving Pageant. Also, no Pilgrims. Because you're only a Pilgrim if you go somewhere. So historical people in England, less "pilgrims," more "locals."

But we weren't skipping Thanksgiving. No way.

However, in the absence of a national orientation toward a day of overeating, this required a strategy.

Problem one: No turkey.

Unlike the US, England does not start stocking whole turkeys around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July (which England ALSO does not celebrate, seeing as they are all poor losers.) Turkeys do not start showing up in shops until a week or two before Christmas, which does *nothing* to prolong the holiday season. Slackers.

So we were not just able to waltz into Tesco's the week before Thanksgiving and disco ourselves home with a turkey.

We had to custom order a turkey from a butcher.

The butcher found this all hugely interesting, and brought his two kids out to watch "the American lady buying a turkey for her Thanksgiving party."

Lori, Cultural Ambassador, at your service.

Next problem: Thanksgiving is not a holiday. Which meant we all had to work and the boy had school. This from the country for whom May Day is a reason to shut down a bank.

Blatant discrimination. Blatant.

I took off a half-day of work, the husband took off a couple hours early and picked the boy up from school instead of letting him go to the child-minder.

You heard me. The "child-minder."

Problem three: The oven. The oven was 1) the size of a happy meal box, and 2) afraid of hot things. At best, it could threaten the turkey with the suggestion of warmth from across the room.

We had some friends coming to join us for the meal – a few chums from the hospital, a fellow American therapist working in the hospital, and a Canadian friend who had missed her Thanksgiving altogether because no one knows when Canadian Thanksgiving actually is.

One of these friends, who also lived in the hospital housing complex, offered up her own oven which she swore reached actual cooking temperatures. This was good – the turkey could cook in her oven, while my oven dealt with sides, which are *far* less intimidating to an oven with temperature phobias.

So on the day, I left work early with my friend's key and made my way home to cook.

I unwrapped my prized butcher-ordered turkey and noticed one thing immediately. This turkey, to put it bluntly, was no Dolly Parton. If the normal Butter Ball is a healthy double D, this bird would barely fill your typical training bra. Clearly, British toms are all leg men.

I dressed, trussed, and seasoned the bird and, leaving the bird on the counter, grabbed the friend's keys to skip over to her place to snag a few baking dishes and pre-heat the oven.

Did you note that I said "my friend's keys?"

I said nothing of my own keys.

Yes, six people coming to their first Thanksgiving Dinner, and I am locked out of my house with a raw, in delicto flagrante turkey sitting defenseless on the kitchen counter.

Brill. (As they say over there.)

But All Was Not Lost. There was a housing office, and the housing office had extra keys.

However, the housing office was also staffed with the kind of women who inspired Pink Floyd to write "Another Brick in the Wall." Everything you've ever heard of about iron-mettled English Schoolmistresses was manifest in the two women who ran the housing office.

I walked to the admin building, planning the strategy that was most likely to get me my spare key with the least amount of sniffing and lecturing.

I settled on panic.

When I got to the corner of the building, I broke into a run. I burst through the door and cried out, "I'm locked out of my flat! With a Thanksgiving turkey *just sitting on the counter!!!*"

Urgency is contagious, I've noticed.

I'm not sure what impending emergency the housing office women envisioned when confronted with a clearly hysterical American shouting nonsensically about a naked, unattended turkey, but it must have been *bad* because I had that key in seconds with no questions asked. There were even words like, "Quick! The key! There's a *turkey out!*"

I sort of wondered if there was some deep, dark national history of abandoned, headless turkeys running amok and ruining property.

Things settled down after that if you factor out trying to cook Thanksgiving dinner between two kitchens. And we somehow made do without a pumpkin pie. There is no pumpkin pie tradition in England, and no canned pumpkin to be had.

The following year I smuggled some in from home to make my own pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving. It went about as well as the turkey.

But that's another story.

*Lori is the author of [In Pursuit of Martha Points](#).*



# Thanks for Spanx...

*By Joann of Laundry Hurts My Feelings*

---

Here we go! The holidays are upon us, again. It's time to bust out the pilgrim salt and pepper shakers.

Oh, who I am kidding! I never put them away after last Thanksgiving. Mr. and Mrs. Pilgrim have been visiting our house all year round because refilling my other salt and pepper shakers would take effort and I am so not into effort. It's why our everyday china is paper plates.

But there is one time of the year I do put some effort into my role as Domestic Diva and that is Thanksgiving time.

I love Thanksgiving because it's a holiday all about giving thanks by gathering your family and friends together and gorging yourself on turkey, casseroles smothered in cheese and pumpkin pie. It's also the one day out of the year, you can get away with squirting whipped cream directly into your mouth.

And that, sir, is my kind of holiday.

And even though I love stuffing myself until I have to take some deep cleansing yoga breaths to ease the stomach pains, I love even more, reflecting on my life and giving thanks for all the big and little things.

I've been contemplating and compiling my list and I'd like to share a few of them with you.

I'll skip the part about being thankful for my family, friends, health, happiness and of course, Bono. Everyone's thankful for those magnificent blessings. Instead, I'd like to share with you some of the good things most people don't even think about.

Here is my list of thankfulness, in no certain order:

~The Chilean Miners— that out of the blackness of despair, 33 men arose into the light, into a second chance at life. Across the world, we collectively held our breaths, united in hope as we watched a miracle unfold before our very eyes. And in these days filled with dismal news, our lives all grew a little brighter in the sweet truth that miracles do indeed happen.

I'm getting a T-shirt made that says, "I ♥ The Chilean Miners, Even The Cheater."

I'm also grateful that this will give Eric Estrada his richly deserved comeback when the movie comes out. I miss his toothy smile and glossy hair.

~Hostess Ho Hos. I'm pretty sure the ingredients on the back of the package are listed exactly like this, "Hydrogenated oil, a bunch of chemicals you don't even want to know about, and that's it, folks."

You can get four boxes for something like 99¢, since clearly chemicals are a lot cheaper than real ingredients. And even though everything about them is so very wrong, they are just ridiculous in their deliciousness. Thank you velvety rolls of lard for making me happy and for coming in packages of two.

~I am incredibly grateful for this look from my childhood.



Because really? Isn't everything after this fashion "No", just a great big step up? I feel like a fashionista when I take a look at this picture and realize how far I've come, even when I'm in my jammies, which may or may not be most of the time.

~I am also grateful for giblet juice. That's right, giblet juice. Because when I was just a young 'un one year, my mom was busy making the Thanksgiving dinner. She'd cooked up the gizzards, neck, heart and liver, (after writing this, I think I might just pass on the gravy this year), and she strained them in this regular pitcher that just happened to be handy. My brother came along a little while later with a big ole hankering for some iced tea. Now, how on earth my brother mistook organ meat juice for iced tea, is beyond me.

But he did and I am ever so grateful for that.

I love telling the story of watching my brother spew gizzard juice over all our kitchen.

~Synchronized line dances at weddings. I love to dance. I'm talking, I am out on the dance floor through every single tune during the reception. That is, until it comes time for The Electric Slide and the Macarena and all of those other, "Let's all act like extras in the Thriller video" types of dances. I hate those line dances because even though I'm a dancing machine, I didn't say I was good at dancing. I am an uncoordinated boob and I look even more boobish when I'm not going freestyle, à la Elaine on Seinfeld.

So that is why I am thankful for these songs because it gives me a chance to cool down and refresh myself with a little healthy pomegranate juice . . . mixed with vodka, of course.

~Which brings me to my next little blessing—I was pumping gas the other day when I noticed my gas station has installed TVs above the gas pumps! Here's another tedious moment in my life that technology has filled. Thank you technology.

And they were running all these interesting little tidbits across the bottom of the screen. There was a tidbit that said some shoe designer was making one-of-a-kind goatskin shoes for the Chilean miners. And I was all, "Hurray for those super cool miners! Now they'll have stylin' shoes to go along with their sunglasses."

And then I thought, Gosh, I sure wish I had a pair of goatskin shoes because I can only imagine goatskin shoes must be FAB-U-LOOOUUS.

And for all you goat huggers out there—I could care less about goats giving their lives for shoes.

Shoes are beautiful. Goats are assholes.

Take it from me. I had a goat in a petting zoo one time, eat the entire strap of my favorite purse. I wish I'd made a pair of shoes out of him.

And I also learned something very practical while watching the gas station TV.

If a bandaid is stuck to one's skin and guaranteed to cause a painful, "YEEEOOW" when being pulled off, just soak the area in vodka first and the bandaid will just slide right off.

Another reason to be thankful for vodka and, of course, TVs in gas stations.

~The man whose running schedule intersects with my school route every morning. His really thick shock of hair and his preference for running shirtless, thereby displaying his nicely sculpted pecs, are as yummy as my morning cup of coffee. And I haven't even mentioned his cut-just-right running shorts. Good Morning Running Man! Thank you!

~I am very grateful for this cherished memento. This is the world I came into:



See, I have three older brothers and three younger sisters. I was the first girl to enter this household of constant black eyes, toy guns and baseball bats. My brothers were my first experience with terrorists. Kind of another reason why I'm thankful for the giblet juice story.

And this moment, just embodies my childhood. My one brother is chasing balloons, which I'm certain after they popped, he either stuffed them up his nose or fed them to the baby or both. My other brother is batting a balloon with a hockey stick, that's right, a hockey stick, right above the baby's pumpkin head. My mother, I'm guessing, is looking for an escape hatch in the ceiling to fly, far, far away from her chaotic life. And the baby, well, I think that just sums up the whole situation. A baby with a gun in his mouth. I'm thankful we all survived.

~The song, "Sweet Home Alabama" because that, Mister, is one kick-ass song. And because when that song comes on the radio, I have no choice but to roll down my windows, crank it UP and sing at the top of my lungs, even if my children are slinking down in their seats, mortified. Actually, any reason to embarrass my children is a reason to be grateful. And because I grew up in the South when that song ruled the air waves, it became our anthem. Even though for many years, I thought the song went, "In Birmingham, they love the gumbo." Which is nowhere near the real verse of "In Birmingham they love the governor"

Clearly, I was not up on my anthem's political message.

~I am thankful for Pam, my senior citizen Walmart greeter.

Pam has hair the color of which I have never seen in my life, it's kind of a fluorescent red mixed with a pumpkin orange sheen. She also likes to draw her eyebrows on, obviously with a very shaky hand and her lips, which are etched in a permanent sneer, are painted clown red.

Pam has definitely picked the wrong profession. Pam is better suited for a job that fits her sneering disposition, something like a women's prison guard or even better, a clerk at the DMV. Pam takes it as a personal affront when I try to replace my dysfunctional cart with its three working wheels, with a cart that, you know, works. And since 90% of the carts at Walmart have polio of the wheels, I am often coming back for one that doesn't bump-bump-bump throughout the store.

Pam does not like this one bit.

And lets me know this through her lipstick stained sneers, heavy sighs and the way she points at me and says mysteriously, "THAT ONE!" No idea what "that one" means.

And there was even one time when she tried to block me from getting a cart. She stood there, trying to look super threatening with her osteoporosis hunch, blocking the carts with her crossed liver spotted arms like she was Betty White's bodyguard.

But I am not one to be intimidated, at least not by 70-year-old women. I just said, "Pam, this is America! And in America I have the right to pick any cart I want! Now get out of my way!"

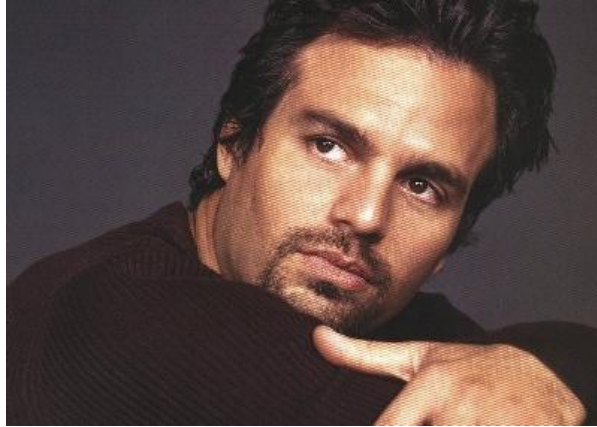
Well, I really didn't say "get out of my way", because maybe I did feel a little intimidated by her liver spots.

But she did move.

And so I'm thankful for America and for Pam because without her, I'd have nothing to tell my Hubby when he says, "So, what happened to you today?"

~ Profanity. Because like Rainman, I am an excellent driver. But I would not be able to be an excellent driver without my wealthy supply of profanity.

~Mark Ruffalo.



Quite often, I thank the Lord Above for Mark and his hot manliness. I also thank the Lord for Google Images because anytime at all I can just type in Mark Ruffalo and wham, that beautiful man is staring at me with his gorgeous dark eyes and perfect lips. Just look at those lips! \*Sigh\* Thank you Lord for Mark Ruffalo and of course, Google.

~ I'm also thankful for Neil Diamond because it proves my theory that there are certain people with hypnotic powers. What else would explain a hairy man in Sansabelt pants building a massive superstar 30-year career out of songs like, "Heartlight" and "Love On The Rocks." The same goes for Rihanna and Miley Cyrus. How did they even get recording contracts? I think it's a mixture of hypnotic powers and a deal with the devil, at least in Miley Cyrus's case. Do not mess with the daughter of an achy breaky heart.

☺ Hysterectomies—specifically mine. Hysterectomies are little party favors from the medical community. It's like the docs are saying, "Thanks for stopping by and making some of our house payments with those three kids you brought into the world. Now here's what we're going to do for you—We're going to take out your tired womb." God bless the gynecologists who have provided this jingly, joyful service to women all over the world.

~And lastly, I am thankful for our dear, precious Monsignor at our church. I'm pretty sure he was Moses's next door neighbor and he might just have hand delivered Mose's original stone commandments to our church. But that's not why I am so grateful for him.

I'm grateful because when my youngest girl went to weekly confession with her class, she was assigned to Monsignor. And for those of you not familiar with the Catholic faith, we no longer have those confessionals where you slide open the window so the priest can't tell who he's talking to. No. You're now in the same room, face to face. Because it wasn't hard enough to confess our sins out loud to a dude in a gown. Now you have to do it face to freaking face. We Catholics love the power of guilt.

So my sweet little girl is kneeling there and she starts out with her, "Bless me Father for I have sinned . . ." She proceeds onto her sins when suddenly she hears a ringing.

And then, THEN! Monsignor holds up one finger for her to stop confessing her little, "I called my sister a pooppy butt." He fishes a cell phone out of his vestments and says to my girl, "Hang on. I've got to take this call."

And that is why I'm grateful to our awesome Monsignor because, that sir, is the best story of all times.

On this Thanksgiving, I am grateful for these blessings and so many other things I haven't mentioned like: flavored coffee creamer, the return of Conan O'Brien, the Ritz Carlton, blow dryers, more cowbell, Spanx, satellite radio, Betty White, Pirate Booty, platinum blond hair dye, the fashion comeback of leggings, my vitamin B12 shots, The Star Spangled Banner, Daniel Craig and his chest, Tweezerman tweezers, my iPhone camera, Johnny Depp, the use of wine and my iPod on a very high volume to combat the fact that my daughters all have PMS at the same time, Modern Family, seeing Bono and the boys three times in concert this past year, San Francisco, Reese's Pieces, Costco, Retin A, and Hammer Time.

May you be filled with rich bountiful blessings of your own on this Thanksgiving and all the rest of your days.

*Joann writes about her life at [Laundry Hurts My Feelings](#).*

# The Perfect Holiday Cake

*By Sara of Tedious Life*

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It was the middle of November when I received a desperate phone call.

"Thanksgiving is coming up, so I want you to decorate a beautiful cake."

**"Cakes? Seriously? When have you ever seen me decorating cakes?"**

"You do all that craft stuff."

**"I glue mustache-shaped pieces of felt on sticks."**

"Please, you are the only one who can. I bought this kit and it has everything you need."

**"I'll try."**

"Okay, I want it to be a Thanksgiving cake with a Harvest theme. Maybe some pumpkins, squashes, a few apples, and some other fruits and veggies pouring out of a cornucopia... And some pilgrims dancing around the giant 'Harvest Tree'... Remember to include the theme colors of brown, green, and orange."

**"I think I wrote that all down."**

I poured the contents of the kit onto the counter. There were a few frosting tips, a cake stencil, and some spray paints (the edible cake kind, not the kind that kills you). No frosting? No pans? No cake? What a fricken rip off.

## **Step 1 to the perfect Thanksgiving cake: The cake is mixed**

I combined the eggs and water in a medium sized bowl and heated the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Next, I poured the Betty Crocker cake mix in the bowl. Done.

## **Step 2 to the perfect Thanksgiving cake: The frosting bag gets filled up with frosting**

My parents bought me one of those frosting bags a few months ago and wrapped it. They passed it off as a gift for Daughter's Day, which I now believe is a holiday that does not actually exist.

Channeling my inner Martha Stewart, I spooned the frosting in the bag and slipped on a "flower tip". (Flowers are like cornucopias, right?)



### **Step 3 to the perfect Thanksgiving cake: The hot cake meets the cool frosting and they make beautiful decorated cake babies together**

The flower tip did not make flowers, it made orange Gene Shalit faces complete with the handlebar 'stache. The leaf tip made little ladders and the flower petal tip made little slides. It looked like my orange Gene Shalits were playing chutes and ladders with pink slides and green ladders across a white, vanilla frosting abyss. Using a spoon, I cut off some of the "hair" on the Gene Shalit faces to make them less Gene Shality. It was a success but the ladders and slides couldn't be fixed and remained that way.

My little pilgrims were simply Thanksgiving candy decorated with little frosting beers. They partied it up under the Harvest Tree composed of chocolate sprinkles and more green ladders.

Rainbow sprinkles were tossed over the scene as a finishing touch, I was done.

### **Step 4 to the perfect Thanksgiving cake: The unveiling of your amazing feat of "cake skillz" that even Martha Stewart would be impressed by**

Despite not being good cooks themselves, my family is often cynical when it comes to the cooking of others. They scoffed at my cake the second they laid eyes on it. This is when I gave my speech about Thanksgiving being about family and being grateful for what we have, not huge turkeys and awesome parties. My family had an insightful moment and then we danced and danced.

In real life, my family agreed that the cake looked like a piece of crap, but it tasted good and they wanted the recipe.

In conclusion, whatever you do this holiday, just remember to thank Betty Crocker and all the other fattening and possibly deadly food companies for making our lives easier.

Thanks Betty!

P.S. They want me to decorate another cake this year. I think I'm up for it.



*More stories can be found at Sara's blog, [Tedious Life](#).*

# A Thanksgiving Rap

*By Kelley of Kelley's Break Room*

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## **"Nice, Nice Gravy"**

### **A Thanksgiving Rap to the tune of "Ice, Ice Baby"**

Yo, get in this teepee, let's kick it.

(nice, nice gravy) x 2

Alright stop, collaborate and listen,  
White in the back, say a prayer for this food we've been fixin'  
Now grab a hold of your bowls tightly  
We'll soon fill 'em up with this food we'll be eatin' daily and nightly  
Will the food ever stop?  
Yo, I don't know  
if you burn all the rice  
Then I'd say so  
To the extreme, hide this food from the vandals  
When see someone sneak by, then blow out the candles

Dance, give our Indian friends plenty of room  
While you watch, don't eat any of those poisonous mushrooms  
Seriously, those Indians play a dope melody  
Anything less than their best is a felony

Love it or leave it, this food'll make you gain weight  
When it comes to food, the Pilgrims & Indians don't play  
If there's a Pilgrim, yo he'll solve it  
Check out this cook named Sun Ray 'cuz his food, you'll dissolve it

(Is that white fella nice, nice...maybe?) x 4

Now that the party is jumping  
With the bass cooking and the veggies are stewin'  
Quick to the point to the point no fakin'  
I'm cooking these beans with a pound of bacon  
Burning them, sorry used to be quick and nimble  
I go crazy when I hear that Indian whistle  
I got on my Pilgrim high-hat, making soup to the tempo  
Hey, can you make these rolls, I feel like dancin' a solo

She's rollin' 'em- 5 different doughs  
Just took the rag out of her mop so her hair can blow  
Why are all you girlies just standing by, ain't no time to be waving high  
Put some yeast in this dough so the bread can rise

Let's keep on, we've got soup stewin' in the pots  
You make bread out of what's left & keep the corn cookin' hot  
Yo, that turkey's dead  
So, I continued to...HEY! HEY! HEY! That turkey just looked at you!

Girls gettin' hot, wish they had a genie  
That turkey's so fast, they need a Lamborghini  
Fellas, you gotta help us this time  
Indians get your spear, white fellas get your nine  
If you're hungry, get up off the wall  
Don't tell me your ill, unless you want to fall  
Gunshots rang out like a bell  
He grabbed his nine, all I heard was shells  
Falling on the ground beneath real fast  
Saw that turkey take his last gasp  
We're jumpin' and jumpin' 'cuz that bird got jacked  
We're so excited knowing our bellies will be packed  
Everyone's now on the scene, you know what I mean  
Let's pack this turkey up and eat him with some beans  
If there is a Pilgrim, yo he'll solve it  
Check this cook named Sun Ray 'cuz his food, you'll dissolve it

Yo take the turkey, it's too heavy for me to hold it  
How great we did this together in case you didn't know it  
Plymouth Rock is our town, that created this peaceful sound  
No need to shake & kick holes in the ground  
'cause our style is like a water spill  
With a love you can vision and feel  
Now let's cook this turkey and keep it warm  
That's a heck of a concept  
We'll make it so ripe, you'll want to step with this  
Now we need someone to slice it like a ninja, cut it with a razor blade  
Now everybody gather together like a big happy fam  
If we were a deli, we'd sell it be the gram  
I've kept my composure, not it's time to get loose  
Everybody grab some water or some blackberry juice  
If there was a Pilgrim, yo he'll solve it  
Check out this cook named Sun Ray 'cuz his food, you'll dissolve it.

He makes a nice nice gravy, that white fella x 4

Yo man, let's get out of here  
Spread the word to your mother

That nice, nice gravy's now cold x 2

*You can find more of Kelley's ditties at [Kelley's Break Room](#).*

Thanksgiving  
Reflections

# To Be Thankful

*By Morgan of A Little Hen House*

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It's been a year. Thanksgiving is here again.

I'm going to sit at your table and eat your food. I'm going to smile and let you hold my baby. I'm going to laugh at your jokes and give you a big hug when I walk in the door.

But in my head? The place where all my thoughts are locked away?

I'll be thinking about this past year. About the bitterness and harsh words. About the lies. The gossip. About my part of the story that has never been told.

I know we aren't supposed to talk about it. To re-live the gory details of what happened over the past year. It's best just to act like it didn't happen, isn't it.

This Thanksgiving, as we go around the room and proclaim what we are thankful for, I'll probably say something nice and simple. But you know what I'm really thankful for?

The ability to bite my tongue. Hard.

*You can read more of Morgan's writing at [The Little Hen House](#).*

# Friends Let Friends Fry Turkeys

*By Liz of A Belle, A Bean & A Chicago Dog*

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Growing up, Thanksgiving just seemed like a speed bump on the road to Christmas. It was a day to dress up, have a formal dinner that took hours to prepare and see lots of extended family. Sure, my mom makes a mean broccoli casserole and I loved pouring a gallon of gravy on my homemade mashed potatoes, but Thanksgiving just never had the glitz and glam and lights and music and spirit like Christmas. It was much ado about nothing if you ask me.

Craig and I moved out of Illinois and away from all our friends and family in the summer of 2003. That fall we decided that we'd travel back home for Christmases, but not Thanksgivings. From that point forward, we were making Thanksgiving *\*our\** special holiday and booked a trip to Philadelphia to celebrate.

I'd be lying if I didn't admit Thanksgiving 2004 did, in fact, involve family. We had moved into our first house in May of that year and we invited my parents and brother down to Memphis for my first attempt at hosting and cooking (with the extensive help of my mother) Thanksgiving in my home.

Thanksgiving 2005 was family-free and a Thanksgiving of many firsts. For starters, we celebrated it with our friends, Carla and Travis. Second, the guys made their first attempt at deep frying a turkey, while we women made sure they had fire extinguishers close by.



Third, I was very pregnant with my very first baby. Kate Elizabeth was born 3 weeks later!



Feel free to insert your own “stuffed bird” joke here.

Thanksgiving 2006 was another fabulous Friends and Fried Fowl celebration, and we feared all of our jeans-clad, laid-back, family-free turkey time would be lost when we moved to New Hampshire in 2007. But it turns out that we are good at making friends because our neighbors invited us, along with some of their other New England-transplanted friends, over for a pot luck style Thanksgiving. Sure, it wasn't fried turkey, but it was no stress, really yummy and lots of fun.

2008 brought our return to Memphis, and 2009, another Thanksgiving with another baby ready to pop... but this time for our friends, Carla and Travis! Like good Southerners, we resumed our fried turkey tradition that year, too.

What I've learned in the past 7 years (and 3 interstate relocations) is that it's OK to create your own holiday traditions. Those traditions may not be the “norm” for many people, but they are yours and that's what makes them special.

Moving away from your family means that your friends fill that gap, and the added bonus of spending the holidays with your friends is that the holidays tend to be a lot more fun! No more worries about crotchety old Aunt Sophie spoiling the festive mood nor the tension between 2 cousins who aren't on speaking terms possibly ruining everyone's meal. Holidays with friends means you can wear what you want, cook what you want, and invite who you want; what could be more enjoyable than that?

So, have I convinced you to call up your neighbors and deep fry a turkey?

*Liz writes about her life at [A Belle, A Bean, and a Chicago Dog](#).*



# We Don't Eat Peacocks

*By Alexandra of Good Day, Regular People*

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It was yet another bewildering holiday in America for all us, a newly citizenized family in the mid 1960's. We gathered in the kitchen, assembling that which we had seen portrayed as necessary in the Sentry Food Store ad insert for a "Thanksgiving Holiday."

We had the large turkey, the crinkly bag of stuffing to be, the boxes of jello to be made, the canned Prince yams, the pumpkin pie, the cellophane bag of cranberries, and the pop-top can of French's deep fried onion rings to place atop the green bean casserole: all at the ready.

Yes, we were all ready to go. Why? We weren't sure. But we were "assimilating" into our new culture. All that we understood, and that our Spanish only speaking mother and grandmother understood, was that we had a day off of school to stay home and eat.

A day off of school to stay home and eat. It made no sense, but that is what my siblings and I instructed my mother and grandmother, on what had to be done that day.

My 2 brothers and my 3 sisters and I were all eagerly shoving black and white sketchings from our school textbooks depicting the First Thanksgiving, into my grandmother's vision. "See, abuela," we told her rushedly in Spanish, "see? Here are the Indians eating turkey and corn and everything else we have to make here today. We have to. It's what they do in America."

"Si, Si..." my grandmother did her best to pretend she understood. But I knew by the sound of her voice, that she had little idea of the purpose of this day.

"I will make this turkey, though we never ate this in South America. It is too much like a peacock. We don't eat peacocks." We all watched her with anticipation, as she rolled the 20 lb bird over and over on the counter. "I wonder how long I shall need to cook something this large for. If I divide it, and quarter it, it shall cook much faster, and then we will be able to fit it into the oven..." she pondered aloud.

"No! Abuela! No!," we all cried with alarm. "See! See this picture here! With this American family?? The turkey is all in one piece! And it's crunchy brown! You cannot cut it up, Abuela, it must be served whole!"

"I see, I see, " she pressed her lips together. "Why don't you, all of you, go and decorate the dining table the way the Americans will do today. I shall see what I can do..."

We widened our eyes at the marvelous suggestion! Yes! Yes! We would decorate the dining table the way the Americans did! Quickly, we all laid down on the dining room floor, with the

day's newspaper before us. We pored over and scrutinized each picture of a typical American family. Studying and majoring in all things American, we were determined to spend the day as Americans would.

We stared, and then we slowly, one by one, became dismayed. We all seemed to arrive at the realization at the same precise moment. We shook our heads. Who and what had we been trying to become? The pictures we were all looking at were so far from what we looked like. The pictures were all of light skinned, blonde haired children. The mother in the picture was a rosy cheeked smiling woman with hair of spun gold, who was entering a room, radiant, proudly carrying a simmering perfectly golden brown turkey on a gilded platter. A turkey that had been left whole.

We were not this family. We would never be this family. We were who we were. We all knew what we had to do.

One by one, we walked into the kitchen, watching as our grandmother struggled with how to know what to do with a bird this large. We put our arms around her, smelled her delicious smell of cuminos and aji and cilantro that always hung so comfortingly around her. "Abuela, " we all said, "why don't you make it the way you know how. It'll be good the way you know how." "Verdad, nina? Can I?" she asked us in Spanish. "Si, Abuela, make it like you know we like it," was our reassuring reply.

"Bueno, Si, I will."

And in that house, on that Thanksgiving, so long ago in the mid 1960's, while other families dined on perfectly golden whole birds, behind the door at this address, was possibly the first ever sliced and quartered arroz con pavo.

And that felt right to us. It was who we were, and no one else.



Alexandra keeps a blog, with her youngest son, at [Good Day, Regular People](#).

# Those Days

*By Kayleen of The Adventures of Chip and Bobo*

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**Those** days.

If you're a parent, you know what I'm talking about. We all have them. The days where everything seems like a battle, and tempers flare in both directions. The days fraught with meltdowns, temper tantrums, and scream fests. And don't even get me started on what the kids are doing.

**Those** days are the ones I wonder what exactly I signed up for in the first place. **Those** days are the ones where I question my abilities as a parent. **Those** days are the ones where I find myself counting down the minutes. Until naptime. Or bedtime. Or crack-open-a-beer time.

I had a couple of those days this weekend. And they had me actually welcoming the arrival of Monday morning, when the kids traipsed off to preschool.

But as I sit here in my quiet house? It's easier to step back and see where those days fit into the grand scheme of things. How, in reality, **those** days sometimes help me see what I am most thankful for.

**I am thankful for green boogies and coughy little rugrats.** Because they make me appreciate the fact that, 90% of the time, my kids are healthy and active.

**I am thankful for a strong-willed daughter,** who wants to do her own thing. Who stands her ground and won't back down no matter how much we plead, cajole or threaten. As she transitions into an adult, I hope it means she will remain a strong, independent thinker, who stands by her convictions and doesn't back down amidst peer pressure... and who isn't afraid to buck the status quo.

**I am thankful for squabbling kids.** For a four year-old that plays too rough with her little brother, or who crushes him with hugs so hard that he starts to cry. For a devilish toddler who antagonizes big sister to no end. Because, even though they don't realize it now, they will look back on their rivalry with affection. And they will be glad they had a sibling to love, torture and tease. That same sibling might just become the best friend they ever had.

**I am thankful for being called out of bed** countless times during the middle of the night for a drink of water, Tylenol, or a child who just wants mommy. And I am oh-so-thankful for the pitter patter of little feet at 4:30 the next morning running to my side. Because someday, we'll

wake up as empty nesters with all the time in the world to sleep, play poker, and wonder what our kids are doing.

**I am thankful for sick, whiny toddlers.** The kind who stay glued underfoot all day long, who prevent me from getting anything done, and who cry incessantly to be pick up. Because I know that, before long, they will run away from my kisses and hugs, and will be embarrassed by the momma who just yearns to hold them and wish they were little again.

**I am thankful for snapping at my equally tired husband** because of something trivial he did... or didn't do. Because at the end of the day, he always accepts my apology. And it makes me realize how lucky I am to have someone who loves me even when I'm bitchy... and who gives me back rubs despite this.

**I am thankful for the days when I lose my marbles.** I am thankful for the days when I yell at my children, or blow a gasket because of something they did. Because I am always reminded later about my children's abilities to forgive, forget and love me unconditionally as if nothing ever happened. Their acceptance of my flaws make me want to be a better mother. And, for that, I am thankful.

**I am thankful for beer.** Because the worries of the day always seem so much more insignificant once I find myself clutching a cold frosty one.

And as ironic as it sounds, I am thankful for **those** days. Because **those** days make you truly appreciate all of the good days.

The good days always outweigh the bad ones.

For that, I am thankful indeed.

Kayleen writes a blog called [The Adventures of Chip and Bobo](#).

# The Evolution of My Family's Thanksgiving

*By Yuliya of She Suggests*

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What I love about being Russian, Jewish and growing up in America is that my family celebrated Every. Single. Holiday.

International Woman's Day? Buy flowers, pamper the ladies and throw a feast!  
Hanukah? Peek inside a synagogue and ready yourself for eight days of merriment!  
Flag Day? Hoist 'em up and drink 'til you see stars and stripes!

When I was a kid, I thought all this celebrating was because my parents were eager to embrace our new country by immersing themselves in American culture while remaining mindful of our Russian roots and Jewish traditions.

Now that I'm a little older and wiser, I realize, *they just like to party.*

When we first adopted the American holidays, including Thanksgiving, my parents would invite friends and family over, cook a huge Russian feast, (a minimum of seventeen dishes) and observed the one all-important tradition- plenty of ice cold Vodka.

Despite my begging, pleading and incessant screenings of 'Leave it to Beaver' for what an authentic Thanksgiving meal should look like, no consideration was given to the "American food" typically served for this holiday.

I'm pretty sure the only reason we even had a turkey was because it was on sale. (I grew to be resentful of turkey because for weeks after Thanksgiving my parents would procure a turkey from their overstuffed freezer and make it for dinner. And lunch. And breakfast.)

As for the trimmings? We served completely un-American things like fur coat (a dish made by layering pickled herring, onions, beets and lots of mayonnaise); my grandmother's infamous egg, cheese and garlic salad; blintzes with sour cream and caviar, and on and on and on, with plenty of dill on top.

Then as the years went by the "American" turkey was joined by a sprinkling of traditional Thanksgiving fare like green beans or a solitary sweet potato. By the mid nineties our table began to resemble a Las Vegas style buffet dinner with its hodge podge of culinary concoctions.

It bordered on the ridiculous.

The poor cooks in charge of this holiday meal began to grumble... "We'll never eat all of this" or "Herring and turkey really don't go together..." And while they were met with resistance at first,

"It's just not a proper feast without Gefilte fish!" Slowly but surely, one dill -topped-dish at a time was being phased out.

And then the first child in our family, my cousin, was born in America. She was a real American. She could even run for President or Miss America!

That's the year my aunt (her mother) bought a Martha Stewart cookbook and took over the Thanksgiving meal. She did it all – the turkey, the yams, two kinds of cranberry sauce and even a home made pecan pie.

We've had my Aunt's Thanksgiving Dinner for nine years running now. We won't let her change a thing on the menu, it's all TRADITION now.

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday for many reasons, the meal being highest on the list. And while I am so grateful for this country and my family, and blah blah blah something else sentimental, my only Thanksgiving wish is that my aunt would make stuffing this year.

*Yuliya shares more of her cultural experiences and life at [She Suggests](#) .*

# War On The Homefront

*By Kristin of Taming Insanity*

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Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday.

Which is why it's somewhat cruel that it's become an epic nightmare since I've gotten married.

To clarify, Halloween with its children wrapped in whimsical costumes, always made me want to have a baby. Christmas is filled with a magic and a majesty that words cannot explain.

But Thanksgiving has always felt like home to me.

Comforting food, enticing aromas, and languid days spent with the ones I love have always made me feel at home.

Since getting married, choosing a place to embrace that feeling of home has become something of a battle.

You see, my husband's family is Jewish. Mine is Christian. While there are ideological differences, it has made dividing up holidays considerably easier. His parents do not want to host Easter, while my parents aren't really planning anything for Yom Kippur. Easy peasy.

Thanksgiving, though, everyone celebrates. Instant minefield.

Add to that the fact that his parents are divorced. Bitterly. Growing up, I had friends with divorced parents but never understood the ember of white hot rage that could continue to burn for decades after the marriage was dissolved. Not until I was married and witnessed first hand how bitterly they can still fight. From a far. Through their children.

Plus, David's sister lives in Portland. His dad and stepmom, Savannah. His grandparents are snowbirds and spend their Thanksgiving in Florida. They all invite us to Thanksgiving. Two of his aunts invite us. His mom in downtown Chicago. My sister's new husband's parents? Invited us to Thanksgiving this year.

My parents, not to complicate things, do not invite us. My mom hates cooking. Instead, they plan to go wherever we go. So, wherever we accept? We have to be sure they're welcome too. Which is a sword of its own. I desperately want my parents to be with us for the holiday. It's just...somewhat awkward to invite them to someone's house.

For the past several years, we've gone to the same aunt's house. We all go and it's turning into a lovely tradition. The food, atmosphere and drinks are divine. And the people we share the day with are incomparable.

The fights with family that lead up to the day? Are a less welcome tradition. Accusations are hurled, we are called names, threats are made towards us. All because of an expectation that we simply cannot meet. Since my teleportation device is not yet finished, we cannot make it to seven parties at once. It's a shame but it's true.

How do we get across the fact that every year, from now on, we will be spending the holiday at this same couple's house? That this is our tradition? That as adults with a family of our own, we do not want to continue to be shuttled around like children of divorce? We want our children to be raised with stability and traditions.

Should I circulate a holiday calendar every January so people know which is theirs? I'm only half joking here. I'm accepting suggestions.

We're happy to dedicate other holidays to certain family members. Passover with his mom. Rosh Hoshannah with his grandparents. But they don't care. They all want Thanksgiving. It is the Holy Grail of holidays it seems. Getting Thanksgiving must mean you've "won".

But the truth is, in family, there are no winners. Because it's not a competition.

Or, it shouldn't be.

While this stresses us out every year, we will still spend the day itself happily ensconced in the warmth of family.

And wine.

*You can read more from Kristin at her blog, [Taming Insanity](#).*



# My Favorite Thanksgiving

*By Momma of MommaKiss*

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I was 10. My parents were divorced. My Momma was starting a new college and had to move us from Michigan to Wisconsin. I was young enough not to get all emotional about the move, but I knew Momma was scared. I'm one of six kids, but just us two "little's" moved with her. My third oldest brother stayed back, even though he was still in high school. He stayed with a friend's family because he simply refused to move at the ripe old age of 16. And the other two older brothers were in college, living the dream. The oldest, my only sister, she had left long ago for the Wild West so we were used to her not being around.

So we moved. Momma packed a u-haul van and on the 6-ish hour trip, my little brother and I kept her company for most of the drive. Until we fell asleep, of course.

We settled into an apartment and it was just a week before school started. There were a few kids in the apartment complex that we got to know, but starting a new school at that age wasn't easy. The most important thing is that my brother and I always had each other's back. We got through the first month OK but missed home a bit. We missed our big brothers and aunts and uncles. Momma started up a calendar with a count down to Thanksgiving.

You see, at Thanksgiving, my big brothers were coming to visit us for the first time. Good Lord was I excited when the day arrived! My little brother and I spent an hour on the front deck waiting to see their car on the street. When they finally pulled into the parking lot, we raced down the steps and were banging on the doors to the car and were scooped up in Big Brother hugs like it would be our last. Of course it wasn't, but we couldn't help it.

Momma just waited in the kitchen, on tip toes peeking out the window. She let us be silly siblings. Now that I'm older and wiser, I'm pretty sure she was a crazy mess inside wanting to hug her boys, too. But she waited. She let us get 'fireman carried' and get our hair mussed up. The big boys arrived on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving and it was just like last year. Except we were now in a 2 bedroom apartment. Didn't matter. We sat close and had a slumber party on the floors. We all ate breakfast at the tiny kitchen table.

Thanksgiving morning, Momma was up with the sun cooking and baking and mixing and loving every second. Momma had borrowed a folding table from our church, which was set up in the living room of our apartment. We bumped elbows and spilled milk and ate every single morsel of food.

Momma let me say the toast – what was I thankful for – and I got all shy and bashful. I was the only girl among those 4 boys and didn't want to get all mushy so I just said "Thank you for cooking, Momma. And Thank God Big Brother A is wearing clean socks."

I wish I had said more. I think they know what I was feeling.

I'm still very close with my brothers. The three alive and the one in heaven. There have been many holidays since that Thanksgiving. All together in one home, or just a few visiting each other. I've had incredible holidays with my new family, as well. But yah, that Thanksgiving of 1984, holds a special place in my heart and is by far my favorite.

*Momma blogs with heart and sass at [MommaKiss](#) .*

# Control Issues

*By Missy of Wonder, Friend*

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I have control issues.

My family and close friends just read that line and died laughing. *Oh, honey, that is putting it mildly. Look up control issues in the dictionary and your picture is next to the definition.*

Even though they're all currently laughing at me, I have to say that I have this amazing extended family. Amazing, because most of us genuinely like each other (I really can't speak for the entire family. You know who I'm talking about, Aunt Eunice.). We *want* to spend time together. We all live fairly close to each other, but the holidays are still a cause for celebration, a reason to spend the day together.

But families, as I'm sure you know, are complicated groups. Liking each other is not always enough. Mutual love and respect does not make the issues disappear. Warm feelings can't smooth out things like, oh, control issues, or complicated work schedules, or the logistics of juggling the holiday schedule to allow for ample visiting time with every branch of the family.

Again, I can't speak for my entire family, but I know them all well enough to say this: every one of them has their own idea of what the perfect holiday looks like. And this may shock you, but everyone's perfect holiday is not created equally. Throw in some small children with their nap schedules and general neediness, and you can guarantee that nothing is going according to plan.

I know, I know: a recipe for disaster when you're dealing with a control freak. For someone in my delicate condition, the holidays are a mine field. To make matters worse, I'm also a people pleaser. Volatile combo, no? I want everyone to be happy, as long as they can be happy doing things my way.

Sure.

Before you go off thinking I'm a spoiled, controlling brat, I'd like to let you in on some secrets. I'm a lot closer to forty than I am to four, and therefore have developed some coping mechanisms over the years. Thanks to my great maturity, my stomach no longer ties itself in knots every fall when some well meaning relative says, "We need to talk about the plans for Thanksgiving and Christmas." Oh, how that used to send me into a tailspin.

*I no longer need to control every aspect of every holiday gathering* (this is a kind of mantra I start repeating around November 1 each year, by the way). What's extra funny about this is that I was never in control to begin with, so I used to just fight a crazy, internal battle over nothing.

Age has brought some wisdom, and what I focus on now is this:

:: These holidays, and these people I get to spend them with, are blessings. Plain and simple (I'm referring to the blessings, not my family. Now they're all in an uproar: *Did you see that? She called us simple! And plain!*).

:: Our time is not our own. It's temporal and it's out of our hands. These days, I focus on the people, not the schedule, or the food, or the decorations. Do not get me wrong - I love schedules, the food is very important, and I love to set a beautiful table. But those things? They're just that - things, superfluous and superficial. Now I take in the room, I try to mentally file away the faces and the laughter. One day, those memories are all we'll have left.

What's the point of this episode of *True Confessions of Holiday Nutters*? For some of you highly evolved, emotionally stable people, there may be no point. For the rest of you, I hope hearing about my ridiculous control issues helps you focus on all that is good and kind and sweet this season.

So as you go about the holiday business of brining a turkey, or racing through clean up so you can get to bed and catch a few hours of sleep before you line up outside the super center at 4 a.m. on Black Friday, I hope that you'll take a few minutes to absorb it all.

Memorize the faces, the smells, the noise. Memorize the good and let go of the frustrations.

To all my Type-A, controlling, people-pleasing, fellow nutcases out there, I wish you a blessed and happy holiday. For you, I'm thankful.

*Missy is the author of the blog [Wonder, Friend](#).*

# The Case of the Corn Casserole

*By Christina of A Closet Writer*

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When I first started dating my now husband I often coined his moms cooking as "Americana." Ya know, hamburger helper, Velveeta, you get the point. It was always really good but a bit beneath me. I grew up being exposed to wedges of iceberg lettuce with Roquefort dressing & Gazpacho. My palate was pretty advanced & Velveeta was not in my repertoire.

I do not know why I had such a chip on my shoulder about her food, but I did. The first Thanksgiving I spent with his family her "famous" corn casserole was made. Now, do not get me wrong, I love corn. However, as I watched her prepare it I was horrified. It had crème corn, other ingredients and then the crowning jewel was Cheez Whiz. Uhhhh, Cheez Whiz, pardon me? Was she kidding?

This was Thanksgiving. When I think of Thanksgiving I think of juicy turkey, toasty rolls, pumpkin pie & and canned cranberry sauce. Uh, what? You heard me, canned cranberry sauce. You know the kind. The one solid mass of cranberry, out of the metal can, little rims around it. Do not judge me, this is about the corn casserole not about my lovely, delicious cranberry can.

So, as I watched her make this corn casserole, I judged in my mind, how could she use Cheez Whiz? Of course, I would try it, that is the only polite thing to do, but I would not like it. Not.one.bit.

So, the time comes for us to sit down at the table and give thanks. As we pray, I am secretly praying that I do not throw up right there at the dinner table due to the Cheez Whiz. This would not make a great impression on my boyfriends parents. The corn casserole is passed around and I take the obligatory spoonful and place it on my plate.

Now, the thing you need to know is my husband's mom really wants people to like what she cooks. Sooooo, she is watching me, waiting for me to try her "famous" corn casserole & give her the culinary thumbs up. So, I dip my fork into the yellow substance, raise it to my mouth and with one final prayer, and take a bite.

I am shocked.Amazed.Beside myself. I like it. No. I love it. This is the best dish I have ever had. Seriously, I considered dumping my boyfriend to date the corn casserole. That is when I knew we would be family someday. This sweet woman wanted me to partake in her favorite dish and love it, love her. And, I did and I still do.

I am so thankful for a mother in law who loves me like her own. And, I am thankful for one that can cook a mean corn casserole!

Amen, let's eat!

*Lovely Christina's blog is called [A Closet Writer](#).*

# Ready, Set, Gobble!

*By Rhonda of Motivation Mama Drama*

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**Nine years ago, my family started a Thanksgiving tradition.** What started out as a simple goal to finish an eight-mile race has since evolved into my huge passion for running. Today, I can't think of a better way to start the day than to be privileged to be a part of sea of humanity with a commonality for giving thanks for family and health. Many cities across the country are catching on to the Turkey Trot trend and cool, brisk November family-friendly races are becoming just as popular as pumpkin pie and football.

In 2002, I was clueless about dry fit or wicking fabric or that cotton socks were a **HUGE** mistake. The only way I knew how to buy running shoes was to go to a sporting goods store and pick out a cute pair. I didn't care about my stride or my arch or the pronation of my feet. I had no idea what GPS was and I certainly wasn't concerned with my pace, heart rate or how to fuel my body. I just wanted to run and I wanted my family to cheer me on to the finish line!

I never thought when I ran my first **Dallas YMCA Turkey Trot** eight years ago that it would be the beginning of many major races for me. I was inexperienced and naive, but I was driven to finish. I had participated in several 5k races, but eight miles seemed nearly impossible. I made a plan and I committed myself to it! I not only successfully completed that first race, I've gone on to run [several half marathons](#) and am currently training for my fourth full marathon.





The Turkey Trot has grown to unimaginable sizes in the past ten years as thousands crowd the streets in Downtown Dallas. Thanksgiving wouldn't be the same for us until we've been a part of the morning festivities. The **eclectic** crowd consists of families, competitive and not so competitive runners, walkers, a few dressed up turkeys, a lot of dogs, many strollers, a Pocahontas here and some Pilgrims there, and the man who runs merely in a speedo and feather each year.

This year marks the ninth anniversary of our Thanksgiving Turkey Trot tradition. While I run, my boys hang out in the family activity area and make their way to cheer for me my last mile. They've learned to time it just right and we have a system for finding one another one the race is complete. Eight years ago, I finished my first race with bloody feet from wearing the wrong socks and slept like a baby the rest of the day from pure exhaustion. This year, it's just a short eight-mile training run a week before the White Rock Marathon.



Whether it's 30 degrees outside or I'm six months pregnant, nothing has broken our tradition. The Turkey Trot is what defines Thanksgiving Day for us. We'll be a part of it regardless of any circumstances and I'm thankful to be able to call it my favorite day of the year.

You can read more of Rhonda at [Motivation Mama Drama](#).



# The Forgotten Holiday

*By Jennifer of Midwest Moments*

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It's Thanksgiving, one of my favorite holidays. I love Christmas and Halloween, too, just like most people, but those two have gotten so ridiculously commercialized and out of proportion that Thanksgiving is flat-out ignored which irritates me. I listen to Christmas music occasionally throughout the year, and I was ok with it when they started playing it the day after Thanksgiving. But now there are some stations that start the day after Halloween! Are you kidding me?

On the other hand, it's kind of nice that Thanksgiving hasn't gotten as out of control as those other two end-of-the-year holidays. I know some people who just turn off their lights and hide or go to the movies on Halloween so they don't have to mess with it. And so many people dread Christmas, there are a slew of books and movies about it like "Skipping Christmas". Thanksgiving has at least managed to avoid that negativity so far. Here are some of the reasons I love it:

1. Its message isn't completely lost.

Granted, a lot of people focus on the food and the football and the big sale the next day, but most people still remember, if not always acknowledge, the point behind it. Maybe it's easier since it's all in the name – it's a time to give thanks, count our blessings, be grateful. And in tough economic times like these, I think the purpose actually gets more attention and isn't overshadowed by concerns about having to spend a lot of money to make it a big celebration like Christmas can be.

2. I get to see all my family without as much stress as Christmas.

I actually don't get stressed about Christmas. I love it and try to remember the reason for the season. But others do get stressed, and it makes it more difficult for them to relax and enjoy the time we're together. That isn't the case with Thanksgiving. In fact, because there aren't really enough of us on my side of the family to warrant an entire turkey feast, last year we decided to buy a pre-made one at the local grocery store.

A traditionalist at heart, I cringed at the idea initially, but since we've had to celebrate at my parents' house in the past because ours was too small, I let it go. We still made some favorite family side dishes, and I was pleasantly surprised about how well everything turned out. And so it was even less stressful than usual because no one was getting up at the crack of dawn to start cooking.

3. Ok, fine, you got me – the food!

I LOVE Thanksgiving food! What's not to like? Turkey, stuffing, potatoes, green bean casserole, and, of course, pumpkin pie! Granted, in this day and age, you can pretty much get that kind of meal any time of year. But I never actually have it any other time. It's still special.

#### 4. The games

Not the football. Well, some of it is ok. I like football – but one game a day is plenty for me. I don't mind having it on in the background. Kind of like starting the day with the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. To watch the entire thing is a bit much, but it's nice to have it on while preparing food and getting ready. The same is true for the football games. After dinner, my side of the family likes to play board games, and we'll have football on the TV. The board games are what I look forward to. It's nostalgic and fun, and also not something I do much during the rest of the year.

*Jennifer's experiences are chronicled on her blog, [Midwest Momments](#) .*