

## TASTE

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1996

## TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JAMES

## Tips for happy first Thanksgiving dinner memories

Let's cut to the chase. This is one of those columns that you will definitely want to clip and save, especially if you have kids who are venturing out for the first time or know newly-weds.

It's a rather simple column, one based on the facts that there are a few rules that must be followed in order to prepare a good Thanksgiving turkey. I offer these tips based on the fact that I have heard all of the holiday horror stories. My own sister cooked her first turkey and failed to remove the bag of giblets and neck from the turkey innards. Momma didn't know whether to laugh or be totally embarrassed. I have talked to people who have sprinkled the bird with cayenne pepper instead of paprika, and have thrown an entire bird away because it had "this little plastic thing sticking out of the breast meat."

### Fresh is better

In order to cook a good turkey, you have to start with a good turkey. Are fresh better than frozen? Does "Amish" mean anything?

As a general rule of thumb, fresh turkeys are better than frozen. Why? Usually fresh turkeys are naturally grain fed, are free range birds (they get to walk around instead of being locked in a cage and never seeing light) and are bred to have more breast (white) meat. Most cheap frozen birds are injected with steroids and hormones that induce growth.

Locally, Roperi turkeys in Livonia (313) 464-6546 are widely respected. Christine Roperi says her turkeys are all corn fed and that's what makes the difference. Roperi turkeys are running \$2.19 per pound for a hen and \$2.09 per pound for a tom.

"The hens are bred to have more slicing meat while the toms are bred to be bigger," said Roperi. But in all honesty, running a real close race to a Roperi turkey are the famed Pennsylvania Dutch Bell and Evans brand turkeys.

Bell and Evans turkeys have been the turkey for the president of the United States for the past 28 years. Folks who have tried a B&E bird claim they are the best. You can only find them at Colasanti's Market in Highland, Market Place Meats in Union Lake, Byrd's in Livonia and Papa Joe's (House of Prime) in Rochester. For the record, Martha Bell and Evan Bell and Evan turkey. Ordering them early guarantees a bird as they will sell out due to limited production.

### Check your oven

After you order and locate the perfect turkey, it's time to prepare and determine the cooking technique. A call to the national turkey hot-lines indicate that the biggest problem facing turkey chefs is that their oven temperatures are off as much as 100 degrees. Oven temperature can be checked by placing a hanging oven thermometer in the middle of the oven and set the oven at 325 or 350 degrees F. Once the oven has indicated that preheating is complete, check the thermometer. This is extremely important to check, especially if you have a self-cleaning oven, say the pros.

All turkeys should be roasted at 325 degrees F., but fresh turkeys need about 13 to 15 minutes per pound while frozen birds (defrosted) will require about 18 minutes per pound. The difference is that fresh, naturally fed turkeys have less fat. The next logical question is to stuff or not to stuff?

The pros generally recommend that you cook the turkey unstuffed. Once the carcass has been cleaned and patted dry, it can be seasoned and inserted with onions, apples and herbs but a stuffed turkey takes longer (about 30 to 45 minutes) to cook and makes for a moister stuffing. Personally, I rely on a good old fashioned meat thermometer. When the thermometer reaches 175 degrees F., it's done. I then allow about 20 minutes of standing time before carving. I always baste my turkeys every thirty minutes during roasting, first beginning with some canned chicken or turkey broth and then graduating to the pan drippings.

Instead of cooking my turkeys on a rack, I place thick slices of carrot and onions on the bottom of a shallow roasting pan to keep the bird out of the accumulated juices. I prefer to start my birds breast side down for the first hour or so and then upright them for the remaining cooking period.

Chef Larry James is a freelance writer. He welcomes your calls and comments. To leave a message for him, dial (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1886. See recipes inside.

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- A harried cook's guide to fast food



Don't let  
the holidays  
go to  
"waist"

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TAMARA GRAY/STAFF ARTIST

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS  
REGISTERED DIETITIAN

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and the holiday parties, social gatherings and visits with friends and family follow right on its heels. This is the wonderful time of year when we enjoy special meals with the ones we love. But look out! It's also the time when pounds can easily slip on, as we make exceptions and indulge our palate on rich, high-calorie food and drink.

You don't have to succumb to the temptations of the hors d'oeuvre table to enjoy parties. Just try to remember to take everything in moderation, and you'll make it through the holidays without changing your dress or suit size. Remember, we don't want your relatives to say there's — "more of you to love" — this year!

It's important to make your food choices wisely. It's difficult, I know, with the array of wonderful food that is indicative to the holiday season. But you can do it.

Look for foods that are naturally lower in calories and fat. Fill up on them and just "sample" the high-calorie, high-fat items. For example, if you are having a traditional turkey dinner for Thanksgiving, choose a small portion of lean meat from the turkey breast and just sample tastes of dressing, gravy and desserts. Help yourself to seconds on salads (light on the dressing), cranberry sauce, plain mashed potatoes, plain sweet potatoes, and other vegetables.

At parties join a cheery group as far away from the buffet table as possible. Also, be careful not to imbibe too heavily in alcoholic beverages. Besides adding extra calories, they also tend to decrease our willpower making it more difficult to resist those additional hors d'oeuvres, or that big slice of pecan pie. It's always a good practice to choose a non-alcoholic beverage such as

sparkling water with a wedge of lime, fruit juice or a diet soda.

Many people who over-eat do so on automatic pilot. This can really be a problem during the holidays as temptations and stress both increase. One suggestion is to make an extra effort to be aware of what goes into your mouth. Make each bite a special event. Study that pig-in-a-blanket carefully before you taste it. Don't just mindlessly plow it into your mouth. Notice its color, texture and aroma. Then take a bite and concentrate on its flavor, texture, and the satisfaction you receive as it is chewed and swallowed. If you don't totally enjoy it, don't finish it.

My friend's Scottish grandmother gave her some sage advice that I believe is particularly useful during the holidays: "better to go to waste than go to waist."

Exercise is important too. Sometimes we get so busy this time of year that our exercise routine is placed on the back burner. Remember to take time for yourself and enjoy a brisk walk, an aerobic tape, game of tennis, cross-country skiing, or any physical activity you prefer.

If it is your responsibility to do some of the cooking for holiday parties, be good to your guests and provide some low-fat, low-calorie choices. Above all, remember what the main focus of the holiday season is all about: making time to break bread with your family and friends. Try to concentrate more on the company of your loved ones, and less on the holiday cookies!

Peggy Martinelli-Everts of Clarkson is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington Hills-based food service and hospitality management company. Look for her column on the second Monday of the month in Taste.

## Good-for-you snacks

Entertaining this holiday season? Here are some suggestions for good-tasting, good-for-you holiday snacks and treats.

■ Endive, celery and cucumber slices make great substitutes for crackers when assembling appetizers. Spreading these with low-fat flavored cream cheese instead of using a high-fat cracker reduces calories, adds fiber and looks good too!

■ If you feel you must have a snack food, such as potato chips or tortilla chips, choose the low-fat versions, but remember they may be lower in fat than the traditional snack food, but they are still loaded with calories. Pretzels with mustard or seasoned air-popped popcorn are crunchy and satisfying.

■ The old standby, shrimp cocktail, is always a crowd pleaser. A one ounce portion (3-4 large shrimp) provides 6 grams of protein and less than one gram of fat. While relatively high in cholesterol (50 grams) it has only .01 grams of saturated fat and totals only 28 calories.

Salmon, another favorite, is 45 calories for a one ounce portion. Salmon has 1.6 grams of fat, but less than a half gram of saturated fat, and is very low in cholesterol (12 grams). Enjoy these with cocktail sauce instead of tartar sauce. Better yet, savor the flavor with a little squirt of lemon.

■ Always include a vegetable tray on your holiday buffet, or make sure your meal includes a few minimally cooked vegetable selections. If you provide a tray, don't spoil it with high-fat dip. Instead, make yours non-fat yogurt based, or use fat-free sour cream.

## Warm-up to leaner options for stew

BY LAURA L. SYKES

SPECIAL WRITER

A simmering pot of stew is a wonderful way to provide a nutritious meal. The only negative aspect of a stew is that it usually has a high fat content. Fortunately we have ways to remedy this problem.

First, we can look for leaner cuts of beef to put in the stew. A wise choice would be to use top sirloin. Another suggestion is to use 100 percent ground turkey meat. Ground turkey adds protein and flavor to the stew without the fat and cholesterol beef provides. One pound of ground beef has 1,400 calories, 120 grams of fat and 384 milligrams of cholesterol.

One pound of 100 percent ground turkey contains only 480.4 calories, 6.0 grams of fat and 220 milligrams of cholesterol.

Canned tomatoes add an unacceptable 2,905 milligrams of sodium to our recipe. By simply using a "no salt added" version, we reduce the salt contribution of this ingredient to 140 milligrams. We also can eliminate the one-half teaspoon of salt. This contributes nothing to our recipe!

By making only three simple changes to this recipe we were able to eliminate 867 calories, 115.2 grams of fat, 27 milligrams of cholesterol and 456 milligrams of sodium.

For more low fat and fat free recipes and kitchen hints from Laura's Fat Free Kitchen, an 8-page monthly newsletter, send a \$4 check or money order for 12 issues to PS Publications, PO Box 7687, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302-7687. Look for Laura's column in Taste on the second Monday of the month.

### MEAT & BEAN STEW (Original Version)

Serves 6  
1 pound ground beef  
1 cup onions, chopped  
1 cup carrots, chopped  
2 cups raw cabbage, finely chopped  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
28 ounce can whole peeled tomatoes, undrained  
30 ounces canned great northern beans, undrained  
1 cup water  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar  
6 drops red pepper sauce  
1/3 cup fresh parsley, finely chopped

Brown beef and onions in a large Dutch oven. Drain fat. Stir in all remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and let simmer for at least one hour. Be sure cabbage and vegetables are thoroughly cooked.

Nutritional analysis per serving:  
Calories: 449.7 kcal  
Fat: 21.1 gm  
Cholesterol: 64.0 mg  
Carbohydrates: 41.8 mg  
Protein: 25.1 gm  
Sodium: 564 mg

### MEAT & BEAN STEW (Low Fat Version)

Serves 6  
1 pound 100% ground turkey breast  
1 cup onions, chopped  
1 cup carrots, chopped  
2 cups cabbage, shredded  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
28 ounce can "no salt added" whole peeled tomatoes, undrained  
30 ounces canned great northern beans, undrained  
1 cup water  
1/2 teaspoon paprika  
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
1 tablespoon red wine vinegar  
6 drops red pepper sauce  
1/3 cup fresh parsley, finely chopped

Place turkey and onions in a large non-stick covered pot with a little water. Cook until turkey is no longer pink and starts to brown. Drain. Stir in all remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for at least one hour or until all vegetables are cooked.

Nutritional analysis per serving:  
Calories: 305.2 kcal  
Fat: 1.9 gm  
Cholesterol: 37 mg  
Carbohydrates: 44.7 mg  
Protein: 31.2 gm  
Sodium: 108 mg