

## **Thanksgiving -reinvented the American way.**

**By Leslie Burman R.D., L.D.**



We have all grown accustomed to one of America's most beloved holiday, Thanksgiving. This is a time to recreate our ancestor's customs and rituals. However, with all of this celebration there is a lot of turkey flying in the air.

When the Plymouth colonists and the Wampanoag Indians shared their autumn harvest the most common known item was not a Tyson chicken, but rather venison and wild fowl. Seafood such as cod, eel, clams, and lobster may have been on the menu as well.

To my great disappointment, those antioxidant- vitamin rich sweet potatoes filled with glorious vitamin A, C, fiber, were not common to find. Ham was not a menu item either. Actually, by this time of the year corn was kept dried out. Our children will get jealous when they hear that by this time of year not very many vegetables were served. You can even the score by informing them that cows were not brought to America on the Mayflower. No milk sauces, cream based casseroles, mayonnaise based ingredients, custards, whipping creams, or all American ice cream. If cheese was on the menu it was from goat's milk.

Another well-kept secret our children would gladly take the opportunity to emulate would be our forefather's table manners. Using fingers, as cutlery was the norm. Occasionally a serving spoon might have accompanied the 'family style' eating. Individual plate settings were eaten with individual fingers. Both, Martha Stuart and Al Gore certainly would have been without a cause. Also, the closer you sat next to some one important meant the better you ate. You ate what was in front of you with the "get what you get and don't get upset motto". Family style was not exactly how we perceive it today.

The pilgrim's biggest meal was noontime. The wives spent all morning making the meal that the husbands brought home. The servants and children served the meal to their pilgrim household.

So how did we manage to alter change our history to help/hinder us the most?

First, nutritionally speaking, our delicious homemade stuffing will provide us with about 400 calories and 30 grams of fat we will not burn off watching The Macy's Day parade.

The pecan pie we are eating for the sake of tradition at 500 calories and 27 grams of fat will not be utilized when out searching in the woods for hours in search of our next venison. Our now Tyson chicken takes less than 5 minutes at Publix, 10 minutes to prepare and a 1-hour football game wait for baking time.

Our milk, cream products we've conveniently added into our vegetables have replaced plague and pox with heart disease and obesity.

Our use of silverware has dignified our homes a bit even if we might still occasionally need tazors and engage in dog fighting.

Today still stands true with regards to sitting next to a big wig for the best chow. "It is not what you know, rather who you know". This is one area where our leaders tend to embrace our forefather's heritage.

When looking back on our customs there are two was history proves beneficial:

First, we can all benefit from eating our biggest meal during our typical lunchtime. We would eat less simply because we are less tired and less inclined to engage in emotional eating.

Since the 1600s we are still reciting myths regarding our Turkey day feast. For example, we all know the extra sauces, creams, and cakes can put us over the 3,000-calorie mark, so the myth that we gain 7-10 lbs between Thanksgivings and New Year's is not unreasonable. However, The National Institute of Health and The Medical University of South Carolina found the average person gains a pound every year. Sounds better, right? It does but do the math. In five years of just one-pound weight gain, 85% of individuals report they never lose that extra 5 pounds.

A present day solution would be to switch your style cooking. Instead of mashed potatoes switch to candied yams. About 200 calorie savings. Stuffing to rice. Depending on how it is made you could have a 500-calorie savings! White meat instead of dark meat will consume 15% less calories. Pumpkin pie instead of pecan pie will save you 500 calories too!

Second, we all lie on the couch after a Thanksgiving meal stating the culprit is the tryptophan in turkey as our ancestors did. The truth is Tryptophan is the least abundant amino acid and other food items eaten with the turkey will win out to get through the blood brain barrier. The high calories will make you sleepy as you are going into hibernation. Most likely our ancestors engaged in much more physical activity or else food would not have been available for consumption. Teevo is a wonderful invention that someone like Thomas Jefferson would truly appreciate.

So let this 'traditional' holiday feast mimic more of the Plymouth family and not let the turkey in you turn into a sleeping bear!

In Good Health,  
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