

# **FISHERMEN'S VOICE**

Vol. 12, No. 12 – Dec. 2007

*News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine*

**FREE**

## **Thanksgiving Observed**

Big day. Family day. Once a year gathering of the clan's remains. Internecine squabbles held in abeyance. Would be the first year without the matriarch who'd passed on just days after 63rd wedding anniversary. Other oldest living had moved to an early Alzheimer's unit at the old folks home. Family home was now vacant and talk had rumbled of having Thanksgiving there. However, the 'heirs' were beginning to circle and no one was willing to give an advantage. One of the youngers finally agreed to take on the tradition though their place was much smaller and still a work in progress. At least it was neutral.

Towards the end of the Matriarch's reign when she'd no longer been able to single-handedly prepare the huge dinner the signature dishes had been assigned leaving at times a forgetful gap or two in the overall repertoire.

Time was set to gather by 1:30. Oldest living's transportation delegated weeks earlier. By noon, to consternation of the chosen youngers hastily finishing house cleaning, families began to arrive. Comfortable chairs were staked out by the male elders and the sound level of big flat screen was soon punctuated by the popping of beer cans. The much youngers gathered in the bedrooms to entertain the newest very young of the house who had just achieved 18 months.

As families continued to arrive the many dishes of warm and cold were settled in various and sundry nooks and grannies about the unfinished rooms. Some never removed from tote bags, just tucked in corners.

By 1:30 the din level in the kitchen had been reached and unattended potatoes for the mashed had boiled dry while the sweets had turned to soup. Frantic call was made to an unarrived to find an open grocery for replenishment along with other orders from the male elders.

By two the delegated transport arrived 'sans patriarch' a shamefaced "Oh my goodness we forgot." This necessitating a double-back of some 14 miles to the old folks home to find him waiting patiently and forlorn by the huge entrance door.

By 3 pm with elder and potato crises resolved, the clan was fairly well settled into three distinct groups. Some more settled than others. Male types with only the occasional grunt or cheer were zoned into the football game on the flat screen. Children had spilled out along with toys to the dining room and an occasional foray underfoot in the kitchen which was populated by female elders delighted by talk of children, jobs, news of the county and latest bargains at Reny's.

Occasional questioning's were heard. "When's dinner?" "Is it time yet, I'm hungry." "Where's the grub?"

Finally, with chosen younger cajoled from the flatscreen, the 30-plus pound bird was lifted from the oven, set on the matriarch's heirloom serving platter and covered to set a bit. From the chosen younger's wife the call goes up, "Who'll make the gravy?"

Suddenly silence.

No takers.

"Someone's gotta do the gravy."

Finally, one of the olders, one who used to run an eatery leaves the fourth quarter tie game, works his way to the stove, assembles with help, flour, milk, turkey drippings, salt and pepper and sauce pan. Now, no less than five female olders, kibbitzim at the ready, gather round to watch and assist with their years of experience.

The older gently cooks the flour, adds the golden liquid fat, whisks in the cream fresh milk and pan scrunchions with scratches of salt and pepper to finger dipped tastings.

"Now," says one of the onlookers, "that's not the way I do mine. Let me show you what I do." As another murmurs "me either". And then an episode develops, known foreverafter in the annals of family lore as the 'great gravy battle'. By five or thereabouts, exact time became a bit fuzzy from hunger, with no less than five gravies warming and cooling, dinner was ready. The gathering, some having to be awakened, some of the youngest with tears from siblings bickering were sheperded to the long table with it's varietal chairs. Bird carved, dishes began to flow until "oh the rolls" rings in the next emergency as they're popped into the oven and heat returned to high gear.

The call for grace is made and hands are held around the table when one of the very younger squeals, "Where's Grumpa?"

"Oh, no, he's locked himself in the bathroom again. Go Dear, get the ice pick and do the lock trick."

Finally all chairs were full, a few words of grace are hastily said, dishes flow around the laden table. Conversation drifts upward again to din level as over it all "Someone get the rolls", "Where's the turnip? Can't have turkey dinner without turnip." "Shush Dear," "What's with this family anyhow?"

Dessert follows as the noise level begins to drop. Pie after pie with whipped cream, meringues, ice cream, triple layer chocolate cake for the youngest flow along with "I'd better not's" and "Just a small piece" to "Some of each, I shouldn't but I'm going to anyway, this is such a special time."

Coffee cups in hand, most of the men olders return to the flat screen. A few pressured by wives are pressed into kitchen duty, "happy" to deal with the mounds of dishes, pots, pans and silverware. Leftovers are picked over and divvied up, turkey remains sectioned accordingly and informal vote taken on the gravies for reference next year. Comparisons are made with Thanksgiving's past as others gather family members for the drive home.

Endearments are shared with soon to be forgotten “Let’s not wait so long to see each other this year,” and the more practical amongst, “See you next year.”

The final members depart as the chosen couple drop to their chairs as she with a questioning tired cry utters the time honored phrase, “Is it really worth all that work for a dinner to be eaten in such a short time?”

\* \* \* \* \*

My Christmas present recipe for you this year and one I’m looking forward to is this quick and easy Nectarine Salad Bowl for the holidays. It was a favorite, so I’m told, of the “Brazilian Bombshell” Carmen Miranda and like her the salad sounds colorful and flamboyant, just the thing to perk up the crowd.

### **Nectarine Salad Bowl**

4 medium nectarines, sliced (2 cups)  
1/4 cup sugar  
1/2 teaspoon ginger  
1 teaspoon lemon juice

3 oz. pkg. cream cheese  
1 small head of iceberg lettuce  
2 cups fresh raspberries or halved strawberries  
1/2 cup seedless green grapes or blueberries

In a medium-sized bowl, combine nectarines, sugar, ginger and lemon juice; toss gently. Cover with lid and refrigerate for about an hour. Drain off the nectarines and keep liquid. In a smaller bowl, mix the drained off liquid with cream cheese. Take a large glass serving bowl, and with the outermost lettuce leaves, line the inside of the bowl. Shred the remaining lettuce and place in the bowl. Arrange nectarines, raspberries and grapes on shredded lettuce. Serve with cream cheese dressing. Serves eight.

A Merry Christmas to all from AJ and I. I’ve certainly enjoyed your emails this year. Fair winds and good roads.

*Lee S. Wilbur*