

ABOUT THANKSGIVING,
OLD GRANDDAD
Second Thoughts
By J. B. Leftwich, Columnist
The Lebanon Democrat

That I am not 42 pounds overweight instead of 12 pounds is probably due to the gene of some slender Leftwich which manifested itself in me.

My physical profile is due in no way to the marvelous cooks who have fed me from day one and who have offered me the means of weighing as much as a defensive tackle on a professional football team.

My adventure in good eating began with the cooking skills of Granny, my maternal grandmother, and extend present cook who, in my opinion, has no superior. These decades of good eating pass through the kitchens of my mothers and my mother-in-law, who in the early years of my marriage was responsible for the 12 pounds I gained and kept.

In this holiday season which dwells on the dinner table perhaps even more that birthed it, my thoughts return to Granny and her Thanksgiving table exactly 60 years ago.

I was a lad of 12, soon to be 13, with an appetite whose enormity I had forgotten until these recent years when I watch four grandsons gather around their grandmother's table. Recently, two of them with a friend stopped off while en route to Memphis to see Tennessee play Memphis State. They timed their trip to be in Lebanon at supper time. I watched my wife prepare the meal. Two big platters of chicken plus various bowls of vegetables.

"Are you sure you'll need all of that chicken?" I asked.

"Just watch," she said.

They marched around the serving table filling their plates. Each started with two pieces of chicken. Each returned for more. The vegetables evaporated. They accepted the offer for seconds on blackberry cobbler.

I watched in amusement while remembering Granny's table and the Thanksgiving meal of 1932.

Our Thanksgiving meals never included turkey. We raised no turkeys, so we ate no turkeys. We ate a fat hen or a capon. Granny's chicken dressing was unequaled. Her creamed potatoes, English peas, sweet potatoes, cream style corn, cornbread, fruit salad, coconut cake and boiled custard (flavored with Granddaddy's sole contribution to the meal) were unparalleled.

To appreciate the significance of this meal, you need to understand holidays were not regarded in my family with the reverence they are accorded in today's commercially oriented society. I have plowed on Independence Day, cut wood on Christmas Day and gathered corn on Thanksgiving Day. Which is exactly what I did on Thanksgiving 1932. Gathered corn. I picked the ears of corn from the "down row," the row the wagon straddled, while Dad gathered from two rows above the wagon.

The last week in November is late for gathering corn, but in 1932 the weather was uncooperative so corn was still in the fields on Thanksgiving. We worked in the field until past noon. By the time we unhitched the mules and arrived at the house, we were starved.

What a meal. Keep in mind Granny cooked in a wood stove and had no way to control temperatures. There were no dials, no setting. She simply knew how to gauge the heat.

After the meal, filled with Granny's food and rosy with Granddad's contribution to the boiled custard, Dad announced:

"Enough's enough. We're through for today. No more corn."

Well, maybe a little corn squeezings for Granddaddy.

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