

Duck for Dinner

Jeanette Rhyan, Texas

It was my senior year in college and Thanksgiving was just around the corner. I was nearing the end of my twelve-week student teaching assignment and looking forward to some down time with my parents.

On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, I changed my clothes after teaching five classes of physical education that day, crawled behind the steering wheel in my car, and began the two-hour drive to my parents' house. Besides singing along to the car radio, I thought about the leftover turkey sandwiches I would be bringing back to school with me on Monday. Time passed quickly and soon I was sitting at the kitchen table enjoying dinner with Mom and Dad.

“So, what’s the plan for Thanksgiving Day? I’ve checked the refrigerator and I didn’t see a turkey thawing out.” I mentioned after dinner.

Mom answered the question. “We’re going to Grandpa’s for Thanksgiving dinner. I’m bringing the pumpkin pies I baked today. They are cooling on top of the freezer.”

“I knew I could smell something delicious.” I continued, “Any other plans while I’m home for a few days?”

Dad answered this question, “I don’t know about you two, but I’ll be on the tractor plowing the west field. You want to join me?” He laughed. “On Friday, you can help bring the Christmas decorations down from the upstairs storeroom. Then you can help me decorate the outside patio.”

“That’s okay Dad. For once, I’ll let you have all the fun sitting on the tractor, but I will help you with the Christmas decorations. You know how much I like Christmas.” I excused myself from the table and headed upstairs to my room to finally unpack.

Thanksgiving morning. “It just doesn’t seem like Thanksgiving without the smell of turkey in the air.” I remarked pouring myself a cup of coffee and joining mom at the kitchen table. “At least I can smell your pies.”

Later in the morning, we made the short drive to Grandpa’s house. Pulling into the driveway I noticed that my aunt, uncle, and cousins had already arrived. It would be good to see everyone,

Grandpa met me at the back door and gave me a big hug and asked about my college classes. I gave him the highlights as I set one of the pumpkin pies on the kitchen table.

I looked around the house. Something was missing, but I couldn’t quite put my finger on it.

Finally, Mom and my aunt called all of us to the dining room table for our Thanksgiving dinner. Wow, there was a lot of food on the table; mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, the good cranberry sauce (from a can), green beans, gravy, dressing, dinner rolls, ham and duck. Duck? I soon realized what was missing. The turkey. There was no roasted turkey on the table.

Sitting at the table, I leaned over to Mom and whispered, ‘Where’s the turkey?’

“I don’t know. Your grandpa roasted a duck for Thanksgiving.” Mom replied quietly.

Trying to keep my voice down, “Duck! Whoever heard of duck for Thanksgiving. I want turkey. That duck meat looks greasy.” Thinking for a moment, I added, “Do you think he shot it himself?”

“I think it’s better we don’t ask.” My mom said under her breath.

Food was passed around the table. I avoided the duck but took a few slices of ham. All through dinner I kept hoping a roasted turkey would magically appear on the table. Mom’s pumpkin pie was delicious.

Later that evening I lamented the fact that I missed having turkey for Thanksgiving.

“What’s Thanksgiving without turkey? It’s like celebrating your birthday without cake or Christmas morning without presents. Some things just go together.” I was pacing around the kitchen. Mom sat there shaking her head and laughing.

“Duck. Who has duck for Thanksgiving? Grandpa must be losing his mind.” I continued. “What am I going to do about my leftover turkey sandwiches? What am I going to eat on Monday for lunch? This is so unfair.” I was beginning to sound way too dramatic.

My mom had listened long enough. “Jeanette, will it make you happy if I roast a small turkey on Saturday and we will have our own Thanksgiving dinner Saturday night?”

“Really mom? That would be awesome. We could have a belated Thanksgiving dinner plus I would get some leftover turkey sandwiches.”

“How many sandwiches do you want?” Mom questioned me.

“6. One for each day this coming week, plus Saturday. I’m getting tired of the college sack lunches they send with the student teachers each day.”

‘For all this extra kitchen work, I’m going to expect you to help with some of the cooking on Saturday.

“Yes Mom. I’ll help.” I hugged Mom and Dad and walked into the living room to watch a little TV. Inside my head, my mind was jumping for joy, doing cartwheels, and having a party.

The weekend flew by. By the time we sat down for our delicious turkey dinner Saturday evening, the outdoor Christmas lights had been strung around the patio and the front eaves. We lingered around the table talking about the farm, the upcoming holidays, and my plans after graduation. Before going to bed Sunday night, I made 6 turkey sandwiches for myself.

Lying down to sleep, I said a little prayer thanking Mom for going above and beyond to make me a special Thanksgiving dinner. That night I dreamt of how good those sandwiches were going to taste during the coming week.

Yum!!!!