

The Best Thanks

By Donna Bishop

The family is gathering from near and far for that special event, Thanksgiving Day. My sister and her two grown daughters will arrive late Wednesday night from Maryland. My son and his new girlfriend need to be picked up at the airport early Thanksgiving morning on a flight from Colorado. I have several to do lists on the kitchen counter complete with a tight time schedule. After years of fixing holiday meals for the family, I have learned that planning is the key to a successful Thanksgiving Day.

The first step is a carefully planned menu, this means not only the big feast, but the meals necessary before and after the event. That wonderful aroma of slowly roasting turkey is bound to bring hungry tummies in and out of the kitchen looking for something to satisfy their cravings. I learned long ago that "Dinner will be ready soon" is not the answer.

Now the preparation of the shopping list is in order. This must be done in extreme detail. A missing spice or ingredient can cause terrible chaos in the kitchen as every cook knows. My next list includes each dish on my menu along with the temperature and the length of time for cooking and the precise time to start each dish. Once I have decided on the time for our meal every item on the menu needs to reach the table at the exact same time and most of it popping hot! This is a work of art as every hostess knows. Oh, did I mention that table needs to be properly planned to accommodate the right seating and enough table settings? Sometimes this feat needs some real creativity.

It is Thanksgiving Day, my daughter is on her way to the airport to get our Colorado visitors, I'm enjoying a few quiet moments as I prepare the turkey for the oven. My sister joins me for a cup of tea as we catch up on our family lives. Soon we will start the breakfast shift as family members wander in for something to eat. We are all eager to greet the Colorado travelers. It has been several years since the last time we were together.

As always the kitchen is abuzz all day long in preparation for our shared meal. The younger children and young at heart are out in the front yard riding bikes and playing catch. Of course, the college-age kids and most of the men are in the den watching one football game or another. Fortunately they are out of the way while we women finish up the meal. Total planning, shopping and prep time I would say took ten to fifteen hours to produce this meal.

The family gathers, the food is blessed, passed and eaten with many compliments to the chefs, all in I would say forty minutes! The best part ever is those that didn't cook happily do the clean up!