

# Leon County Cooks: Making Memories

By Sherry Matney

There are many reasons I love Thanksgiving, not the least of which is an excuse to cook all those recipes I've accumulated through the year. I love the memories the holiday conjures up while the turkey is roasting or the pecan pie is baking. Long ago images of huge family get-togethers on the Barnett side of the family; the table piled high with the bounty of the garden, the pig pen and the chicken yard. There were so many aunts in the kitchen with my grandmother that there simply was no room for a curious little girl to learn how things were put together.

Scattered pictures in my mind at the Woodard's place are vastly different. My Grandmother Woodard was much quieter than my Grandmother Barnett and had a smaller family. There was room to crowd into her small kitchen and help break up the cornbread and biscuits for the dressing. It was a special treat to taste the dressing before it went into the oven. Another staple on the Woodard Thanksgiving table was a Carmel Pie. Oh my goodness!! My mother and grandmother made baking it look so simple and I have tried and tried but have yet to be successful with this venture.

My Thanksgiving memories are a special Blessing and for them I am thankful and now it's time to make memories with my own grandchildren. We did not raise our turkey or chicken; eggs and potatoes came from Brookshire's; we bought sweet potatoes on the side of the road and pecans at Sam's. A friend from Flo, Debra Richardson gave me some beautiful "neck pumpkins" that will make enough pies for an army. Scooter, my brother, took home a 25 pound turkey from the Lone Star Turkey Shoot and I get the privilege of stuffing that sucker.

My sister, Trudy, will bring chicken and dressing made the old fashioned way. She also makes a delicious cranberry salad and sweet potato casserole. Sister-in-law, Dora, will bring ham, green bean casserole and delicious chocolate chip bars. I have a recipe for stuffing that I tried last year and will be delicious with Scooter's turkey. Two must-haves are cauliflower salad and broccoli salad; cheesy potatoes are a favorite of my grandkids.

Because we will have almost 50 family members and a few additional friends, our Thanksgiving feast will be at the Lone Star Community Center allowing kids plenty of space to play basketball and volleyball while the grownups visit.

Following clean-up time we will load the kids on a trailer and have a hay ride back over to our place, about five miles from the Center, and then have a bon-fire. Surely all of that is good enough to make a few memories!!

**Cranberry, Sausage and Apple Stuffing** (this is really good and makes a great casserole without the turkey)  
12 cups bread cubes, baked until slightly dry  
1 pound sweet Italian sausage, casings removed  
1/4 cup butter  
2 large chopped onions  
4 teaspoons poultry seasoning  
2 cups chopped celery  
3 tart apples - peeled and chopped  
1 cup dried cranberries  
1 1/3 cup chicken stock  
Salt and pepper to taste  
(2 teaspoons dried rosemary is optional. I don't use it.)

Sauté sausage in a large skillet over medium heat, crumbling coarsely, for about 10 minutes. Remove sausage to a large bowl with a slotted spoon. Empty pan of grease.

Into the same pan melt the butter. Add onions, apples, celery and poultry seasoning. Sauté until softened, about 10 minutes. Add dried cranberries and cooked sausage. Mix all with the dried bread cubes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Moisten with chicken stock.

Stuff turkey adding additional chicken stock to moisten stuffing if needed. Follow baking instructions for times and cooking temperatures.

Remaining stuffing can be baked in a covered buttered casserole at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes.

**Cauliflower Salad**  
One head Cauliflower - chopped  
One red onion - chopped  
Dressing  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
1/2 cup sour cream  
Seasoning salt  
Garlic salt  
Celery salt

Put cauliflower and onion in a salad bowl. Mix sour cream and mayonnaise then season to taste.

**Caramel-nut Cheesecake** (I haven't tried this one but it will be on the table this year. It's easier than Carmel Pie)  
2 cups graham cracker crumbs  
1 cup chopped pecan, divided  
1 1/4 cups sugar, divided  
4 (8 oz) packages cream

cheese, softened  
1 tsp vanilla  
1 cup sour cream  
4 eggs  
1/4 cup caramel ice cream topping

Use a cheesecake pan or line a 13X9 inch pan with foil. Make ends extend over sides of pan. Mix crumbs, 1/2 cup nuts, 1/4 cup sugar and butter; press onto bottom of pan. Bake 10 minutes at 350 degrees.

Meanwhile, beat cream cheese, remaining sugar and vanilla with mixer until well blended. Add sour cream; mix well. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating after each just until blended. Pour over crust.

Bake 35 minutes (350 degrees) or until center is almost set; cool completely then refrigerate for four hours. Top with remaining nuts and caramel topping.

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