

# A Vegetarian Thanksgiving with Family



**“A great thanksgiving is possible without a big house, a big bird, or a whole day spent in the kitchen.”**

BY FRAN MORAVCIK

Thanksgiving, all agree, is best spent with family. What does this mean for those of us who may have no living kin, may not be comfortable in the company of those we have, or can not afford a long trip to see the ones we love dearly? If the gay/lesbian etc. community feels like family to you, why not celebrate Thanksgiving there?

Fifteen Thanksgivings ago my friend Al Perkins decided to do just that. She invited the entire mailing list of the Crones, a social group for women over age forty, to come to her place for Thanksgiving. Actually it was to be held the Sunday before, to accommodate those who had obligations elsewhere yet wanted to be with their friends as well. Nonetheless this was a valid Thanksgiving for the 20 women who came, and for those who have attended every year since. Only three times have there been less than 20 guests, and twice there have been 35, quite a crowd in a 1010 square foot condo.

Being a lesbian event, it is of course potluck, but Al has never dictated what is to be contributed. One memorable year it was all desserts, to the delight of every inner child.

In accordance with her principles, Al proclaims this a vegetarian feast. No turkey has ever died for her table, but a tuna or chicken

salad has occasionally appeared. She says skeptics who believed it could never be Thanksgiving without turkey have changed their minds after experiencing the day at her house.

There may or may not be a tofu turkey or pumpkin filled with stuffing, but there is always cranberry sauce. Along the way there have been alcohol-free years, but for a while now a bottle or two of wine has joined the cider, sodas, tea and coffee. However, the

real draw for those who come year after year is not the food, but the conversation, laughter, and a chance to relax in congenial company.

As Al's experience shows, a great Thanksgiving is possible without a big house, a big bird, or a whole day spent in the kitchen. This is not to discourage those of you who really enjoy recreating the whole Norman Rockwell scene with two daddies and/or two mommies, as well as a greatly skewed ratio of uncles to aunts.

Thanksgiving is the perfect festival

with which to begin creating traditions to suit your lifestyle. It is one hundred percent American without the patriotic posturing, has a spiritual component without being religious, and, being the first blockbuster event of the season, it can set the tone for the tidal wave of frantic togetherness which will leave us washed up on the beach with a splitting headache come January first next year.

So please yourself. Whatever works for you in the privacy of your own dining room is nobody's business but yours and whomever you invite in to share the day with you.

And in the good American tradition you probably do invite people whom you suspect might otherwise spend the time alone. This generous inclusiveness is really what sets Thanksgiving apart from the usual family dinner or party within your circle of friends.

Many are the foreign visitors who got their first glimpse inside an American home while facing a giant turkey surrounded by its weird carbohydrate companions, passing the gravy to grandma, and trying to discuss football with somebody's uncle. For some this was the only time they saw that home. No one would consider an invitation to Thanksgiving as implying that all are to be best buddies from then on. It is a chance for a friendly gesture, and even those who must refuse are the happier for knowing they were thought of.

I would like to add another category to your list of possible invitees. How about asking in some g/bt folk who are spending the long weekend in heterosexual company? Not for the feast itself, of course, but maybe for drinks afterward, a game of Scrabble or Gay Trivia, or a muddy hike to burn calories.

I learned of this need from a therapist who was shocked by mid-winter suicides in our community. She attributed them to depression starting when they separated from their normal circle of like-minded people and were immersed 24/7 in a straight environment.

Her clients were the g/bt students at a large state university, admittedly a special subgroup, but vulnerable situations can arise at any age. She recommended that you not spend more than three days in straight company without taking half a day off to share private time with your partner or find some other way to get in touch with the gay world and your own self-esteem.

Does hosting Thanksgiving sound like serious business and a lot of work? I asked Al why she kept on doing this, since she has returned to having the old-fashioned feast with her children on the day itself. She says that this is the best-attended Crones event, that it has become a tradition that others expect of her, and that to her this is the real Thanksgiving. To which somewhere between 20 and 35 women would say, this year as always, amen, sister, amen. ▼

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