

▶ **Johnsburg chef Debi Stuckwisch's** perfect pumpkin pie. **Photo by Dave Shields**



## The True Meaning Of Thanksgiving

**MY** favorite Thanksgiving memory was when I was about 13 years old, and my mom, dad, younger brother, sister and I drove "over the river and through the woods" to my grandparents' house in a wooded community about 45 minutes away from our home. Arriving at their house was magical because of all the yellow, gold and brown oak tree leaves scattered on the lawn and driveway that crunched underneath our feet as we walked to the front door.

We would play with our cousins until dinner was ready. Through the kitchen pass-through, I watched

my grandma make homemade stuffing by soaking chunks of white bread in water, and then squeezing the bread in her hands to remove the excess water. She added sautéed onions, celery, butter, seasoning and chopped apple to the bread and stuffed it into the turkey. Yum!

All the kids sat at the kitchen table and ate turkey dinner with all the trimmings, including sweet potato casserole with marshmallows on top, green bean casserole, mashed potatoes and jellied cranberries.

After dinner, all the kids performed a musical recital for the adults, which included singing songs and my

cousin, Kathy, and me playing guitar. We both were taking guitar lessons at the time, and she brought some of her John Denver music, and I brought some of my Beatles music and some folk songs. Afterward, we would sit at the grownups table to eat pumpkin pie with whipped cream and ice cream.

**Donna Bieschke**, Marketing & Public Relations with McHenry County College in Crystal Lake

**P**umpkin pie and chocolate cake were standard Thanksgiving desserts in my family. As my birthday falls just after Thanksgiving, the celebration was always combined.

The year I turned 21 years old, our Thanksgiving party not only had family, cake and candles, but a tumbled turkey for added entertainment.

My mother was a very happy, positive, charming and beautiful woman. She had invited her six children and their spouses to her new home for Thanksgiving dinner. I was helping my 100-pound mother slide a 30-pound turkey out of her oven. Somehow the pan slipped, and the brown, buttery, fully-stuffed bird tumbled to the floor. What a mess!

Instead of anger, my mother's response was to start laughing. When she laughed, it was contagious. Everyone was laughing as we lifted the turkey up, cleaned it off and served it.

It wasn't easy to remove the slippery stuff from the floor, and my shoes were ruined ... but it was a great Thanksgiving memory.

Afterward, we had pumpkin pie, birthday cake, candles and more loving laughter!

**Sue Dobbe**, Dobbe Marketing and PR in Crystal Lake



▲ Sue Dobbe and her mother.

I grew up in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. My mom never made her own turkey until she was 65 years old.

She didn't have to. My family always celebrated Thanksgiving with our next-door neighbors, Joe and Mary Breig. The Breig's had a large family of their own, and (fortunately) they also had a large dining room!

Early in the morning on Thanksgiving, my mom would send my sister, Donna, and I to the Breig's home to help Mary get ready for the big dinner. Mary was best known for her fantastic coleslaw and burned dinner rolls. To this day, I don't care for any other coleslaw because it doesn't match up to Mary's. She cooked with a 1943 Chambers gas stove — a real classic! Mary's daughter still uses the stove today.

You never knew who would show up for Thanksgiving (or any other meal) at the Breig's house. I can recall a variety of people, including an exchange student from Spain, a priest from Denmark, a nurse from South Korea and — always — a huge assortment of aunts, uncles and cousins (from our family and the Breig's).

As a side note, I am a direct descendent from three pilgrims: William Bradford, Stephen Hopkins and George Soule.

**Diana Kenney**, executive director of Downtown Crystal Lake / Main Street

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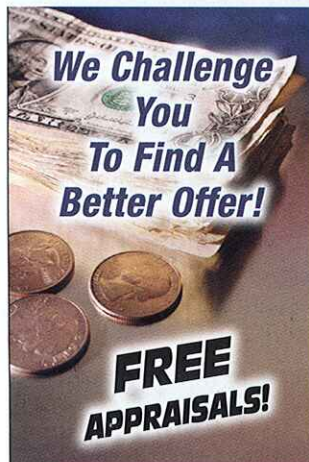
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