

The PACKARD PRESS

A collection of thoughts and stories to educate, entertain, and inspire.

Thanksgiving Turkey Gumbo on the Menu

PLUS, RECIPE TIPS!

Football, family, and delicious pots of turkey gumbo — Thanksgiving has always been one of my favorite times of the year. For my family, this season is all about gathering and sharing traditions, putting extra focus on what we are grateful for. We typically alternate between two locations depending on the year — staying local in San Antonio or visiting my wife's family in Mesa, Arizona.

When we head to Mesa, it's always a huge affair. My wife comes from a large family, and everyone brings their signature dish to the celebration to create a wonderful Thanksgiving spread. The Wednesday before usually turns into a whole block party, with



Michael's Easy Tips for Amazing Gumbo:

- Roux can be tricky to prepare and takes about two hours to make. For an easy base for your gumbo, look for the Louisiana Fish Fry Company's Gumbo Base, typically hidden in a kiosk by the fresh seafood section.
- Add 2 packets to 8 cups of water and bring the broth to a boil.
- Add a few stalks of diced celery (with the leaves included), diced bell peppers, and a handful of whole green onions. Simmer until the veggies are soft.
- Cook your meat and follow the package instructions for when to add it.
- Make a hearty amount and freeze some for later. This locks in the flavor for a delicious round two.
- Gumbo is meant to be shared, so be mindful of allergies when using shellfish.

folks from the neighborhood and my wife's childhood friends stopping by for some pre-Thanksgiving fun.

Having a hungry crowd is good because I always make way too much of my special signature dish, turkey gumbo. I make a hearty roux and add plenty of vegetables (especially the "Holy Trinity" of Cajun food: celery, bell peppers, and onions). Then I throw in the turkey and sausage. This has become a fan favorite among the people who know me **(and you can learn all about where my love for gumbo comes from inside on Page 2)**. Gumbo always tastes better on the second day when the veggies, spices, and meat can infuse, so I usually prepare it the day before the festivities. Plus, the kitchen gets very occupied on Thanksgiving morning!

Along with food, family and friends, I always look forward to our annual Turkey Bowl flag football game early Thanksgiving morning. Most everyone shows up to either cheer or play, and the winner gets to keep the trophy and have 12 months of bragging rights. We have three goals: Don't get hurt. Have fun. Win. As long as we hit that first goal, it's considered a success. With a family our size, it ends up being a huge game. We sometimes break out into two simultaneous games, with the 13 and under kids on a different field than the older folks. It's a total blast!

We have our Thanksgiving meal early in the afternoon so people can return to the different food stations we set up for round two (and round three). Everyone dishes up their plates and goes outside to eat in the warm Arizona sunshine. It is a lot of fun to catch up with so many loved ones. After dinner, the kids usually play a little basketball or pickleball, and a few of us sneak in a cat nap on the couch. There's usually a group singing around the piano, and there's always a football game on the TV. As long as you can navigate the large group, it's wonderful!

Ultimately, Thanksgiving is all about family, food, and fun. The warmth of being with loved ones combined with beloved traditions makes it such a special time of year. Plus, there's something absolutely magical about sharing gumbo, flag football, and a turkey-induced nap. Happy Thanksgiving from my family to yours!

—Michael Packard

NAMES THAT ALMOST WERE

The Bizarre and Creative Titles That Nearly Defined Our States



One of the first things you likely learned was the name of your home state, but what if everything you knew about your state's namesake could have been different? Prepare for a journey through the quirky and bizarre world of almost-names for states! The early days of American statehood were filled with creative, peculiar, and downright odd suggestions. Let's look into history and uncover the surprising stories behind the names that could have been.

Kentucky

Kentucky's famous horse race was almost known as the Transylvania Derby, but it has nothing to do with vampires. In 1775, a businessman named Richard Henderson established the Transylvania Company and signed a treaty with the Cherokee tribe, securing land known as the Transylvania colony. However, Henderson's treaty failed as Virginia had already claimed the land. Years later, in 1792, those living on Henderson's attempted purchase broke away from Virginia to become Kentucky. Despite naming the state themselves, the residents couldn't decide whether the state's new name meant "prairie," "land of tomorrow," or "river of blood."

Utah

When Brigham Young, the leader of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (widely known as the Mormon church), moved the congregation west, they settled in the Salt Lake Basin. He petitioned Congress to create a new state for them and settled on Deseret, after a name in the Book of Mormon, one of their scriptural texts. The government declined the request until 1896, granting them statehood in a smaller area than they had originally hoped for. They still didn't get their desired name, though; the government named the state Utah after the Ute tribe that called the area home.

Nevada

The name Humboldt almost became the name of the state of Nevada. It comes from explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, who helped popularize scientific exploration. Though he traveled thousands of miles across Central and South America, he never made it to the Western United States. So, when Nevada became a state in 1864, they used the Spanish word for "snow-covered" instead.

History is full of "what ifs" and whimsical alternatives that could have shaped our country. These almost-names remind us of the rich tapestry of the past and the imagination that defines our nation.

SPICY BEGINNINGS

FAMILY, FLAVOR, AND THE MAGIC OF CAJUN COOKING

In eighth grade, I discovered this wonderful thing called crawfish; the rest is gumbo history.

Growing up in Southeast Texas, I was exposed to some of the best Cajun food Texas has to offer. When I discovered this spicy, favorable cuisine as a young person, I had no idea it would spark a lifelong passion for cooking gumbo.

As kids, we would always play with crawfish out in the backyard when it was extra rainy, but I didn't know people actually ate them until I was older. In eighth grade, I went to a crawfish festival, and they had the most extensive variety of crawfish dishes I had ever seen. That day, I fell in love with Cajun cooking.

My stepmom, Nancy, is from Louisiana. When I was a freshman in high school, she came into our lives with an encyclopedia of Cajun food in her head. I loved her gumbo and always looked forward to it. Once I went to college, I wanted to be able to cook something unique, something people had probably never tasted before, and gumbo was it!

Whenever I make gumbo now, people tell me it's the best they've ever had. Half of them are sincere, and the other half are just being polite, but it's the proper thing to say when someone's prepared gumbo. (Gumbo takes a lot of hard work and is a huge labor of love, but the end result is always worth it!)

Traditional gumbo variations, like seafood or chicken and sausage, are delicious. The "Holy Trinity" of Cajun cooking — onions, bell peppers, and celery — gives this dish its deep, savory flavor. I typically enjoy making a chicken and sausage gumbo (or turkey and sausage for Thanksgiving) since some family members are allergic to shellfish.

The beauty of gumbo is that it is so versatile, and each pot tells a story. Don't be intimidated by crafting the perfect roux, a mix of flour and fat that thickens this soup. You can easily make this essential element of gumbo by using the Louisiana Fish Fry Company's Gumbo Base, which you can find in most grocery stores. So, whether you're gathering for a holiday feast or a cozy meal at home, there's nothing quite like a bowl of gumbo to warm the heart and soul.



—Michael Packard

Unlock the Power of Thankfulness

Simple Gratitude Practices for a Happier, Healthier Mind

Practicing gratitude and acknowledging what we have in life can transform our mental well-being and relationships, especially when things become stressful. A thankful attitude can help ground us and be a powerful antidote to resentment. This Thanksgiving, I wanted to share a few of my favorite techniques for cultivating a heart full of gratitude and appreciation.

Gratitude Lists

Gratitude lists are an excellent way to focus on things you are thankful for daily. All it takes is spending a little time to write three things you are grateful for.

It could be something as simple as a cooler day or your daughter asking for one more hug as you leave for work. These small moments are special, and as you make your gratitude lists, you'll see positive things everywhere. In my family, we like to make a list together using a gratitude wall. We hang a long

piece of butcher paper on the wall, and throughout the month of November, we jot down things we're thankful for.

Meditation

Meditation is another effective way to focus on what you are thankful for. When I meditate on gratitude, I try to channel the general feeling rather than focus the meditation on a specific event. To do this, think about your current state of mind and then take an inventory of the people and circumstances that led you to where you are today. Reflect on how thankful you are for your health, the food you eat, and the Earth you live on. You could also imagine someone you love and visualize what it is about them that caused you to feel gratitude.

Antidote to Resentment

I also like to use gratitude to counteract resentment. If I'm feeling resentful or negative about something or someone, I look back on my life and think of times



when people were particularly merciful or kind to me. I'm especially grateful for the situations where someone extended kindness or forgiveness to me when I didn't deserve it. With a thankful mindset, I can reexamine my resentment and watch it melt away.

Taking a moment to focus on gratitude can shift our perspective and how we view the world. By focusing on the positives, we enrich our well-being and our relationships with loved ones.

—Michael Packard



TAKE A BREAK

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|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Apple | Gratitude | Pie |
| Basketball | Leaves | Stuffing |
| Black Friday | Nap | Turkey |
| Fireplace | Parade | Veteran |



Spinach, Lentil, and Roasted Beet Salad

Ingredients

Inspired by MinamalistBaker.com

- 1/2 cup green lentils, rinsed clean
- 1 cup vegetable stock (or water)
- 3 medium leeks, chopped
- 1 medium beet, quartered
- 1-2 tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper
- 4 big handfuls of spinach

Dressing

- 1/4 cup tahini
- 1/2 medium lemon, juiced
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 3-4 tbsp olive oil
- 1 pinch each salt and pepper

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F and grease a rimmed baking sheet.
2. To a small saucepan over medium-high heat, add lentils and stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 20-30 minutes uncovered until all liquid is absorbed. Set aside.
3. Add leeks and beets to the baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Bake 15-20 minutes. For crispier beets, bake for an additional 10-15 minutes. Set aside.
4. In a small bowl, whisk all dressing ingredients until combined.
5. In a larger serving bowl, combine spinach, beets, leeks, and lentils. Add dressing and toss to coat.

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1. Can't Beat Turkey Gumbo on Thanksgiving
2. Discover the Fascinating 'What-If's' of State Names

Crafting the Perfect Gumbo With Love
3. Gratitude Is the Antidote to Stress

Spinach, Lentil, and Roasted Beet Salad
4. Healthy Hydration With a Twist

The Packard Family Is Here to Help Your Family! *Personal Injury | Social Security Disability | Car Accidents | Special Needs Planning*

'WATER' YOU WAITING FOR?

Spice Up Your Hydration Game With These Additives

Hydration is essential for your health, but are you feeling a little parched in the flavor department? It's time to give your water a splash of taste with additives that fortify your health. From zesty citrus to invigorating herbs, these fun and flavorful enhancers will have you reaching for your water bottle in excitement. So, if you're thirsty for change, get ready to add a little pizzazz to your glass and stir up your wellness game with these refreshing twists!

Lemon

Restaurants serve water with a wedge of fresh lemon for a reason. Citrus fruits are among the most popular water additives thanks to their refreshing flavor and nutrients. Lemons are an excellent source of vitamin C, which boosts your immune system. Adding lemon slices or juice to your water can help increase your fluid intake and reduce the risk of specific health issues related to vitamin C deficiencies.

Magnesium

Magnesium is a powerhouse mineral that helps regulate blood sugar, maintain healthy blood pressure, regulate nerve and muscle function, and support a wide variety of other bodily processes. You can add magnesium supplements, including

flavored powders, to your water to reap the powerful benefits of this nutrient. Magnesium can also boost your mood, help you sleep better, and improve your exercise performance.

Ginger

Ginger's spicy, warm flavor is great in teas and can transform your daily water intake. This root contains antioxidants and anti-inflammatory properties to help reduce swelling. It can also reduce pain, aid in digestion, decrease nausea, and help you heal from colds more quickly. People have used ginger for medicinal properties for thousands of years, and it's a tasty way to drink more water.

So, why settle for plain water when you can turn it into a wellness elixir? Incorporating these flavorful and health-boosting additives will make staying hydrated more enjoyable and support your overall well-being. Drink up!

