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**How big is your Thanksgiving turkey?** I am always daunted or maybe flabbergasted is a better word, by people who cook mega turkeys. You've seen these ginormous beasts in the supermarket. I'm not sure which is bigger, a Mini Cooper or one of those super turkeys. I guess one of these monsters would fit in my oven but I'm not convinced I could lift it.



*And the leftovers, my gosh, they must go on and on for weeks!*

Unless something more pressing like skiing or the beach was on the agenda, my family always sat down to a traditional Sunday dinner when I was a kid. Those Sunday feasts were a small celebration of family, sort of like a mini Thanksgiving. More often than not, a roast was the centerpiece, roast beef, pot roast, leg of lamb, roast chicken or pork.

And if memory serves, those Sunday roasts lived on for at least a couple of nights as leftovers. Most afternoons as six o'clock approached, my sister, brother or I, or more likely all three of us, began to pester Mum. We'd ask that universal question, "What's for dinner?" On leftover nights, the answer was more often than not "Mrs. Slusser's Delight". For many years, I assumed that Mrs. Slusser was a mythical character like Betty Crocker or Duncan Hines and developed by Mum to sell those leftovers.

**Without a Madison Avenue campaign to cast her,** I always imagined Mrs. Slusser as a large, middle aged woman who wore flowered housedresses and ruffled aprons. Think Ethel Mertz and you'll get the picture. Mrs. Slusser was no gourmet cook. When Mum channeled Mrs. S., her "delightful" concoctions were whatever could be found in the refrigerator plus a splash of wine and a dollop of sour cream. Rice or noodles were usually added to stretch the Sunday roast for just one more meal. The results were hit and miss.

Imagine my surprise when I learned a few years ago that there actually was a Mrs. Slusser. She was the grandmother of Dink Slusser, one of my dad's fraternity brothers at MIT. I've got to hope for his sake that Dink was not his real name but a nickname. Anyway, after every vacation Dink would return to Cambridge loaded down with bags of leftovers from his Grandma S. Dink and friends would throw everything together, give it a stir and call it dinner if not delightful.

With all respect to Dink and his granny, leftovers are more than a way to quickly and cheaply feed a bunch of teenagers. They are a great opportunity to reinvent a meal. I'm happy to throw some leftover chicken into a wok with fresh veggies for a flavorful stir-fry or add pork to a black bean chili. Any extra lamb is delicious in a fiery Vindaloo curry. Add steak or shrimp to a medley of crispy veggies tossed in a spicy vinaigrette and you've got a tasty Thai salad. The possibilities are only limited by your imagination.

**But back to the Thanksgiving turkey,** what is the perfect size? Although I stay away from those super-sized turkeys, don't get me wrong, I like turkey. I just don't want to eat it for days and days and days. About three-quarters to a pound per person is more than enough for the feast, a few sandwiches and dinner on Friday. Then it's time to throw the bird into the kettle for some amazing soup.

**How big a turkey are you cooking this year?** I guess it all depends on the size of your oven, the number around your table and just how many of Mrs. Slusser's delightful recipes you have collected.

Happy Thanksgiving, enjoy the long weekend and bon appétit!

## Turkey Noodle Soup with Spinach



*If you don't have a leftover turkey handy, you can use leftover chicken and chicken stock (homemade or store bought). Enjoy!*

Serves 8-10

Olive oil  
 1 large onion, chopped  
 4 carrots, chopped  
 4 celery stalks, chopped  
 4 cloves of garlic, minced  
 Pinch dried chili flakes  
 1/2 cup dry white wine  
 10-12 cups homemade turkey stock  
 2 cups crushed tomatoes

3-4 sprigs thyme  
 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary  
 1 bay leaf  
 2-3 cups leftover turkey cut into bite size pieces  
 Sea salt and freshly ground pepper to taste  
 6-8 ounces baby spinach  
 4-6 ounces angel hair pasta, broken into 2-inch pieces

Lightly coat the bottom of a soup kettle with olive oil. Add the onion, carrots and celery and, stirring frequently, cook over medium heat for about 10 minutes or until the onion is translucent. Add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes more.

Add the white wine and simmer for 3-5 minutes. Add the turkey stock, crushed tomatoes, thyme, bay leaf and turkey. Increase the heat to medium high and bring the soup to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

Raise the heat to medium-high, add the spinach in handfuls and stir to combine. Stir in the pasta and, stirring a few times, cook for 2-3 minutes or until the pasta is al dente.

Ladle the soup into mugs or bowls and serve.



## Turkey Stock

1 turkey carcass  
Water  
1 large onion, quartered  
2 carrots, cut into large chunks  
2 celery stalks, cut into large chunks  
1 bay leaf  
1 teaspoon dried thyme  
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Put the turkey carcass, vegetables, bay leaf and thyme in a large soup pot, add enough water to cover the turkey plus an inch or two, season with salt and pepper and bring to a boil over medium high heat. Skim the foam as it collects on the surface. Reduce the heat to low and simmer for about 3 hours.

Strain the stock through a colander and discard the solids. Strain the stock again through a fine-mesh sieve or a colander lined with 2-3 layers of cheesecloth. Cool the stock, skim the excess fat and refrigerate until ready to use.