



## Home Is Where the Heart Is at Thanksgiving Roasted Mushrooms, Leeks, Shallots & Pearl Onions

Fall 2013/Volume 374

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**There is only one place to be on Thanksgiving – home.** My home, your home, anybody's home; it doesn't matter as long as it's not a restaurant. Unfortunately, I have celebrated Thanksgiving in a restaurant three times. Never again!

It started when Nana Westland broke her hip. My grandmothers took turns hosting Thanksgiving and Easter. It was the Westland's year to give thanks and dinner to the family. With Nana on a walker, Grandpa invited us all out. Although she hated to cook, I don't think Nana broke her hip to get out of hosting the family feast. Grandpa was a golfer and his club put on a big Thanksgiving dinner. We put on our Sunday best and headed over to Braeburn Country Club. It was noisy and the food so-so.



The reasons are hazy but the next year, Nana Nye, who liked to cook, followed suit. Pop Nye didn't play golf and didn't belong to a country club so we all met up at the Red Coach Grill. The restaurant increased their capacity, maybe even doubled it, by renting extra tables and chairs from the local bingo parlor. It was bedlam with too many people and too much noise.

When talk began of another (overcrowded) restaurant meal, my mother put her foot down. Sometime around Halloween, Mom announced that she was cooking Thanksgiving dinner and we were all welcome to join her. If there were any protests from the Nanans, they were ignored. Mom continued to cook Thanksgiving dinner until the early nineties when the next generation took over.

Meanwhile, I was in Switzerland and cooking for friends and holiday orphans. When I finally returned to the US, it was to California. While it was still far from my New England home, it was the perfect opportunity to celebrate and give thanks with my niece Gillian and her family. It was such a good idea that my parents flew out to spend the holiday with us. Everything went off without a hitch. Mom and Dad flew in on the weekend. Gillian and the boys drove down on Wednesday. The weather was fine, dinner was delicious and we had a wonderful time.

So wonderful, we decided to do it again the next year. Only this time, I'd drive Mom and Dad to up to Gillian's and she'd cook. Everything was on track until Wednesday morning when Gillian called. Her boys had a nasty flu. Unhappily, we all agreed it was best to stay clear.

With Thanksgiving a mere twenty-four hours away, we went on a turkey hunt. After checking every supermarket for miles, the smallest bird we could muster was a hefty twenty-five pounds. It was a bit large for three and a little late to rustle up another twenty or so dinner guests. Admitting defeat, Dad scanned the newspaper ads while I pouted and then called around for reservations. The food was pretty good but the restaurant was quiet and subdued. Instead of noisy families jammed together, the dining room was half-filled with twosomes and threesomes. We did our best to be jolly and thankful.

As we drove home, just as my mother had pronounced thirty or forty years before, I declared never again. Six months later, I moved to New Hampshire to ensure that there would always be lots of family around and a few extra friends to fill the table.

That's not to say it has always been smooth sailing. Over the past ten years, we've had our share of family emergencies and changes of plans and venues. In spite of it all, we've managed to celebrate at home. And for that, I am thankful.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. Bon appétit!

## Roasted Mushrooms, Leeks, Shallots & Pearl Onions

*Pearl onions were a Thanksgiving tradition at our house. Mom combined her go-to ingredients (cream of mushroom soup, sour cream, dry sherry and grated parmesan cheese in the shiny green canister) with frozen pearl onions and baked them until brown and bubbly. My updated version uses fresh mushrooms instead of mushroom soup, adds shallots and leeks and roasts them in olive oil and sherry vinegar. Enjoy!*

Serves 12

2 pounds whole mushrooms, trimmed  
 1 pound frozen pearl onions  
 6 shallots, peeled, trimmed and quartered  
 Olive oil  
 Sherry vinegar  
 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves  
 Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
 6 leeks, dark green tops removed, trimmed and cut in half lengthwise and then crosswise\*  
 1-2 cups chicken stock  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 2-3 tablespoons butter, cut into small pieces (optional)



Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Put the mushrooms in a roasting pan, lightly coat with equal parts olive oil and vinegar, sprinkle with thyme, salt and pepper and toss to combine. Roast the mushrooms at 400 degrees, cup side up, for 15 minutes. Turn the caps and roast for an additional 10 minutes or until nicely browned.

Set aside until the mushrooms are cool enough to handle. Depending on the size, leave the mushrooms whole, halve or quarter.

Meanwhile, put the onions and shallots in a roasting pan, lightly coat with equal parts olive oil and vinegar, sprinkle with thyme, salt and pepper and toss to combine.

Add the leeks, drizzle with equal parts olive oil and vinegar and sprinkle with thyme, salt and pepper.

Add 1 cup chicken stock to the pan and place in the oven. Roast the vegetables at 400 degrees for 15-20 minutes, turn the leeks, add the garlic and toss with the onions and shallots. Add the mushrooms and more broth if necessary and return to the oven. Continue roasting until browned and tender, 10-15 minutes more. Add the butter and toss to combine.

Transfer the vegetables to a platter and serve immediately.

*\* Leeks are often pretty dirty. When you trim the ends, leave the root ball intact so the leaves stay together. Cut in half lengthwise, gently rinse the leeks under cool, running water and pat dry with a clean dishtowel before cutting crosswise.*