

# HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTH IS

## THANKSGIVING TRADITIONS

article by **Jeanne Ferris**

In sunny San Diego, one must look for the signs of fall: maple leaves that have fallen and crunch underfoot, pumpkin patches with gourds and haystacks, and the occasional drizzly cloud coverage. These are a few of the symbols that give the Thanksgiving season its warmth, purity in sharing and grace. The gathering of families and shared recipes is for many, a timeless tradition. Generously set tables with extra chairs invite everyone from family to strangers. Loneliness is banned, as we practice “purposeful giving”, through food, family, and fun.

What better time of year than now to start some of your own family traditions. Being of Italian heritage, the best place I know to start is the kitchen. We always roast a 35 lb. turkey hen (juicier than tom turkey) in the oven at 400 degree temperature for an hour beginning at 7 a.m., then subsequently at 325\* till about 2 p.m. While it “rests” for an hour covered with parchment, which is in turn then placed under aluminum foil. Roasted sweet potatoes are a dish that can be started the day before. Like Pilgrims and Native American Indians before us, everyone brings a dish to share.

Easter Bread is one recipe tradition that has been passed down by my Italian great grandmother, Felicia, (she was one of those cooks who never wrote down her recipes). Calling it Easter bread at Thanksgiving doesn't seem to bother anyone and is a tradition in many Mediterranean cultures. It's



so sweet it needs no butter and it is woven like the Jewish bread challah and covered with egg wash to give it a gorgeous caramel brown. Made the old fashioned way of kneading and rolling with flour, then rising under a towel; the scent of this bread would waft throughout the house, creating olfactory memories for an entire generation.

Fresh chestnuts, which can be found in most supermarkets, is another hallmark tradition. They MUST be fresh (if not, they WILL explode and scare the heck out of you.) Cook flat on a baking sheet at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes. If carelessly piled up, they will steam instead of roast. Then kick back, pass the chestnuts around and listen to Dean Martin crooning, “chestnuts roasting on an open fire...” It's a fun way to bring the family together and create your own memories. Remember, Home is where the hearth is. Who needs snow?