



BOB’S THOUGHTS
BOB BAUM

Rebecca’s search

Editor’s note: Bob Baum grew up in Union. He retired in February after 43 years, mostly as a sports writer, with The Associated Press in Portland and Phoenix, Arizona. He lives with his wife Leah in Island City.

Forewarning: This column is special. There is such a need for happy-ending stories these days.

So let me tell you about Rebecca

She was born on July 29, 1986, at a Portland hospital.

Her mother struggled with drug addiction all her life, so Rebecca’s childhood was pretty miserable.

She figures she moved perhaps 20 times as a child. She recalls being evicted one Christmas Eve. For a time, the family lived in a campground. The father of her half-brother was abusive. She left home for good at 14.

Rebecca had an older half-brother and a younger one. All had different fathers. Except Rebecca didn’t know who hers was.

She knew one thing for sure, she was very different from those around her.

And where did that curly hair come from?

When she was 16, Rebecca and the rest of her extended family moved to Florida. The plan was for the many addicts in the family to get off drugs. It mostly didn’t work. Rebecca’s mom died late last year of complications due to her long drug history. She was 54.

At 19, Rebecca married Evan and the couple and their beloved dogs settled in to a house in Clearwater.

She had pretty much given up on finding her father. It seemed impossible. Her mother told her of a man that might be him. Rebecca met him once in a bar, and he wanted nothing to do with her. Rebecca was sure he wasn’t the right one.

She lives a busy life, working as a due diligence specialist for an investment firm while attending college full-time. She’s on the brink of earning an associate’s degree in business and will transfer to University of South Florida to pursue her bachelor’s degree.

Last Christmas, Rebecca’s boss gave her, as a gift, membership in Ancestry.com. Maybe, just maybe, that would lead her to her dad.

On May 21, I received an email. It read, in part:

“From the DNA it appears you are my dad. ... I’ve wondered who my dad was my whole life and it’s a question I desperately need an answer to. ... Again, I am not looking for anything from you but a possible relationship but I will respect your decision either way.”

As any reader probably has guessed by now, I’m Rebecca’s dad.

Of course, I had no idea she existed. Her mom didn’t remember me and, sadly, I didn’t recognize her from photos Rebecca sent me.

I do not have an Ancestry.com membership. But my oldest sister does. So do several other relatives.

Rebecca reached out to some of them. The most helpful responses came half-way around the world from Lindsay, the granddaughter of my oldest sister who lives with her young family on Okinawa, where her husband is stationed.

Lindsay, who had been through this sort of thing before with another family member, helped Rebecca sort through who all these people are. Advances in DNA testing are astonishing. Ancestry identified my sister Janice as Rebecca’s aunt. Others were her cousins.

All signs pointed to me.

I knew nothing of this. A couple of strange messages had been sent, one to my wife Leah on Facebook, seeking my email address. At first, we figured it was some scam and told her to go away, something for which my wife subsequently apologized repeatedly.

Then another sister showed up at my doorstep to give me the news. My reaction was, initially, shock.

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The Centerpiece Of The Holiday Meal



Jarrad Henderson/Detroit Free Press-TNS

Sue Selasky’s roast turkey with sage pan gravy.

Top Turkey Tactic

By Susan Selasky
Detroit Free Press

Thanksgiving is a meal about comfort food, and that’s a good thing.

Comfort food doesn’t always come easy, but smart cooks know that a good game plan will get them through the big meal.

If you haven’t begun planning your feast for the holiday, fear not. We’re here to help. After all, Thanksgiving is about giving and sharing.

As the holiday approaches every year, we get bombarded with turkey recipes, tips and cooking suggestions from all sorts of sources, but we believe in sticking to tried-and-true techniques to help achieve our ultimate goal: a deep honey-brown turkey with crisp skin and meat that’s tender and juicy.

There are so many ways to cook a turkey. You can roast, grill or fry it and cook it in a bag, in a pan or on a rack. You can even take it apart and roast it or cut the back out and flatten it (a process called spatchcock) so that it cooks in half the time.

But in the Free Press Test Kitchen, we’re creatures of habit. We wet or dry brine the turkey or apply a seasoned butter under and on the skin. Brining helps ensure that the turkey stays moist. Using seasoned butter means there’s no need to baste the bird. When it’s time to cook, we roast or sometimes grill, which frees up oven space.

ROAST TURKEY WITH SAGE PAN GRAVY

Serves: 12 / Preparation time: 1 hour /Total

time: 3 hours

- One (12- to 14-pound) turkey fresh (or frozen and thawed)
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh sage, divided
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1¼ teaspoons kosher salt, divided
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1 lemon, halved crosswise
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 3 carrots, coarsely chopped
- 3 celery stalks, coarsely chopped
- 2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 cups no-salt-added or less-sodium, fat-free chicken stock, divided
- 2 cups water
- 3 tablespoons white wine
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

Preheat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit.

Remove giblets and neck from turkey; discard liver. Reserve turkey neck and giblets. Pat turkey dry with paper towels; trim and discard excess fat. Starting at neck cavity, loosen the skin with the breast using your fingers at first. Then gently slide a thin plastic spatula under the skin, pushing it gently to loosen the skin under the entire breast, legs and thighs.

Combine 2 tablespoons sage, oil, butter, 1 teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Rub sage mixture under the loosened skin and over breasts and drumsticks. Squeeze juice from 1 lemon half over turkey; place remaining lemon half in cavity. Tie legs together with

kitchen string. Place reserved giblets, neck, garlic, carrots, celery, onion and bay leaf in the bottom of a large roasting pan. Add 1 cup stock and 2 cups water to pan. Place roasting rack in pan. Arrange turkey, breast side up, on roasting rack.

Bake turkey for 1 hour and 20 minutes, rotating pan every 30 minutes. Increase oven temperature to 425 degrees (do not remove turkey from oven). Bake turkey an additional 30 minutes or until a thermometer inserted into meaty part of thigh registers 160 to 165 degrees. Remove turkey from pan; place on a cutting board. Let stand for 30 minutes. Carve turkey.

Place a large zip-top plastic bag inside a 4-cup glass measure. Strain pan drippings through a colander into bag; discard solids. Let drippings stand 10 minutes. Seal bag; snip off 1 bottom corner of bag. Drain pan drippings into a medium saucepan, stopping before fat layer reaches the opening. Add remaining 1 tablespoon sage, remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, remaining ¼ teaspoon black pepper, 1½ cups chicken stock and wine to drippings in pan; bring to a boil. Cook for 15 minutes or until reduced to 2½ cups. Combine flour and remaining ½ cup chicken stock in a small bowl, stirring with a whisk until smooth. Stir flour mixture into stock mixture in pan; bring to a boil. Boil 1 minute or until slightly thick, stirring gravy constantly. Serve gravy with turkey.

315 calories (26% from fat), 9 g fat (3 g saturated fat), 3 g carbohydrates, 52 g protein, 349 mg sodium, 172 mg cholesterol, less than 1 g fiber.

Simple soup can conjure memories

Brodo is the Italian word for broth — o’s that roll over their d like a mountain stream over stones. Its sound moves through the mouth more like broth than does our own word, one that fades abruptly into fuzzi, taking like fur next to satiny brodo. I am not an advocate of cultural self-loathing, but some words just don’t fit. Brodo does.

In certain Italian preparations, brodo is allowed to take the main stage, poured in its understated elegance over simple pasta — a few handmade tortellini or ravioli — and that’s it. Letting broth shine is a global culinary tradition. Think pho, dashi, borscht, sweet-and-sour, avgolemono, cocky leeky, consommé, or the proverbial chicken soup, dishes that vary widely in flavor but all start pretty much the same way: fill a pot with water, add bones (or vegetables),

simmer.

When I say broth — or stock, or, especially, brodo — I’m not referring to anything you’ve ever poured out of a can, salty bouillon cubes dissolved in hot water, or concentrates dolloped into the pot. On the road to true broth, there are no shortcuts. While there may be a place for these stand-ins amidst our crowded lives, they aren’t brodo.

When I speak of broth, it is of that rich, impossibly simple liquid that enthalls our senses with the same charisma as a steak. It is peasant food in one of its most compelling forms: pleasure and sustenance drawn from leftover



EATER’S DIGEST

SARAH WEST

bits, technique that relies on diligence and time more than expertise or expense, a humble food fit for kings.

I avoided making broth for a long time because it seemed like too much fuss for soup baute.

Something distant haunted me, though, in my dismissal of homemade broth: a soup my mother often made soon after Thanksgiving that we would relish for a week or so each year.

Once the carcass was cleaned of sandwich meat, she transformed it into a tub of broth that lived in the fridge. For a quick lunch or dinner, she warmed some on the stove, adding bits of turkey, thin strips of Napa cabbage placed in the pot just long enough to soften but not fully cook, and a few dashes of soy sauce for seasoning. It was the essence of simple — mild flavors and subtle saltiness, the

satisfying chew of the turkey, the light crunch of the cabbage, and something else that went beyond flavor, beyond feeling. I loved this soup more than the entire Thanksgiving feast, and since a turkey carcass only came around once or twice a year, it was a delicacy I looked forward to.

Food can set this kind of hook in us. This was plain turkey soup not a gourmet meal, but for me it was anchored in a particular time and place.

I grew up in the Midwest where late November could already be quite cold. Where a body adjusting to its new reality — to days shortening and trees (most of them deciduous) stripped of everything green and ice growing from the edge of the lake — might need something deeply comforting.

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