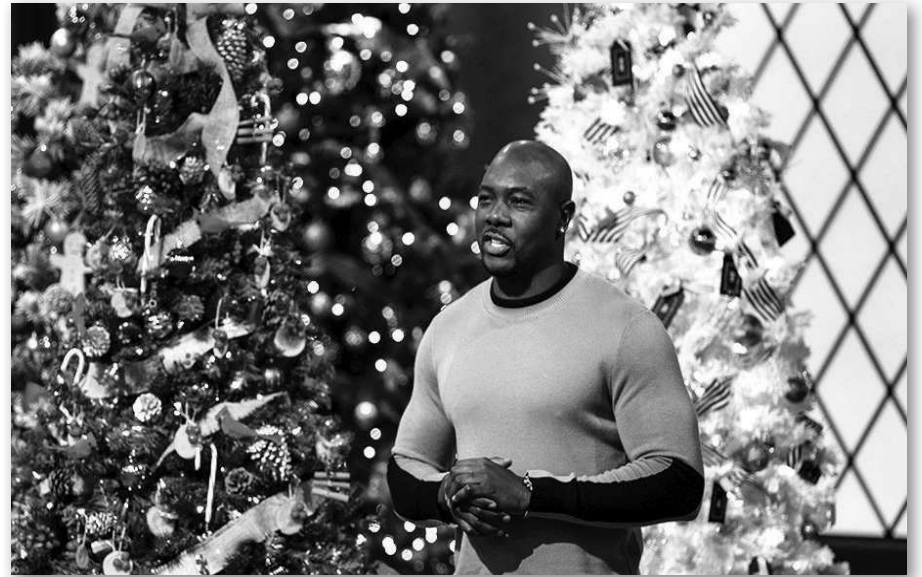


Christmas

with Food Network's

Eddie Jackson

-It's about the meal



BY GEORGE DICKIE

If you are spending Christmas with Eddie Jackson and his family, you will be assured of three things: There will be many guests, you will be among talented chefs and you will eat well.

And interestingly, the Houston food truck maven and host of such Food Network series as "Kids BBQ Championship" and "Christmas Cookie Challenge" will likely not be at the stove.

"My dad just cooks anything under the sun ...," Jackson explains. "He knows that I cook for a living so he kind of leaves all the cooking to himself and he kind of lets me take a break, which is always a good thing."

Indeed, when Jackson visits his father and family for the holiday in Dallas, the senior likes to show off his chops in the kitchen. And that starts with the protein.

If it's turkey, it is either smoked or roasted. If it's smoked it's done low and slow – at least four hours for a 14-18 pound bird. If it's roasted, stuffing enters the picture.

"We just do a straightforward, made-from-scratch dressing (with an unsweetened cornbread base)," Jackson says.

Other side dishes can include baked macaroni and cheese and turnip or collard greens. For this they turn to a cookbook written by Jackson's grandmother, Ruth Jackson, a professional chef.

"We do ours the old-fashioned way, so we cook ours with some sort of meat," Jackson says of the greens. "We like to use like a smoked turkey leg and basically we just simmer it all day long so that the greens are really nice and tender."

And for dessert, it's sweet potato or pecan pie – made from fresh pecans from the backyard pecan tree.

The beverage isn't fancy, beer or whiskey, and on the TV is always sports – appropriate since Jackson is an ex-NFL cornerback.

"Basketball is usually for Christmas," Jackson says. "You know, they have three or four basketball games that come on Christmas Day so that's what we're watching."

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