

I learned that answer the other night when I started at 10 p.m. cooking what must have been the 80<sup>th</sup> turkey I have baked in my lifetime. It was for a church dinner. You don't believe I've cooked that many? Take my age, 88 years, subtract 21 years for when I was a child, and first married and didn't know how to cook. Then multiply that number which is 67 by 1.5...You are lost now, but will you take my word for 80 turkeys? It is important to have transparency, so I will admit there may have been one or two Thanksgiving, Christmas or church dinners I ate without getting my hands involved in preparing an uncooked turkey for a waiting oven.

But, to the answer. It came straight from God, or Spirit, if God was busy in Washington, D.C., Syria, Afghanistan or Israel or all the other places He has to frequent. The answer I received was not a thunderous word, or a sentorial blast, with the angels crowding around for a good look. It came as a simple aluminum pan, its corners leaking delicious turkey broth, begging to be made into gravy. The precious fluid swirled all over the pan, then escaped through the two slits I had made in the pan. The roasting rack needed the extra space. The delicious broth I had used for basting every half hour, had leaked into the second pan underneath, which leaked onto my nice clean oven floor.

When I opened the door to read the meat thermometer, liquid also poured all over the floor. I used about half of a roll of paper towels to staunch the flow, but I might have well tried to stop the Missouri River from flooding its banks. Moreover, my new hot pad touched the red hot grills of the oven and burst into flames. I quickly stuck it under the faucet. Who wants the fire department out here at past midnight? Heads would pop out of hallway doors to see the offender.

I decided to check the meat thermometer before I removed the turkey from the oven. The flesh on the legs was crispy and bones exposed. Too exposed, I feared. What is the flesh like? "It's overcooked, and the turkey and I are ruined forever," I decided. The oven interior was too dark to see the numbers, so I hunted up my trusty flashlight and magnifying glass. Prepared for action, I carefully looked at the thermometer. It registered 180 degrees! Poultry needs to cook until only 165 degrees. The turkey probably was cooked to a crisp! And I would be banned from the church kitchen forever.

Hopefully, I swallowed my pride and this Old Turkey carefully lifted the 12 pound young turkey off the rack into a foil lined recently cleaned dish tub. My turkey was done, and a beautiful brown crust. I had sought advice for cooking turkeys from the plastic covering of the turkey; advice from my 60 year old cook book; and advice from computer sites showing several Moms, who smilingly waved a spoon in the air over their handsomely baked turkeys. I wrapped it carefully with one more piece of foil and returned it to the refrigerator. It will rest there until 8:45 a.m. when a church friend will pick it up and deliver it to the church. I looked at my watch. It was 1:30 a.m., and the turkey and I were finished.

Oh, the answer, you insist, so I will tell you. He, God, spoke in solemn deep base tones: "Nancy, you are a hard nut to crack, so I opened the slits more for the liquid to drain all over the floor and the bottom of your oven. This will create enough cleaning up for you, so that maybe this time you will heed my answer. It is No. No. NO. His voice grew louder with each word. I see His point. Maybe 81 turkeys, more or less, is enough.