



# FOOD



## Dressing vs. Stuffing

### A food that goes deeper than the 'stovetop'

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As we near Thanksgiving, I, like most readers, look forward to fellowship with family and friends, and anticipate several “to go” plates lovingly wrapped in foil, stacked in an old grocery bag, and well-guarded (hidden). Like most families, the key ingredient to a good Thanksgiving is, of course, love and a heart full of thankfulness. BUT, if the dressing isn't right, you and your turkey may be “roasted”.



Amia Edwards

Unfortunately, my family really won't be gathering for the social holiday this year due to the infamous COVID-19. So, I prepared my own Thanksgiving menu for one. Then, it hit me. I don't know how to make “dressin”. Can I make cornbread? Yes? Can I chop and add the standard ingredients? Yes – onion, celery, bell pepper, some leftover bird, broth, sage, salt, and pepper. In theory, I can “shake a tail feather” when it comes to preparing the dish. But have I ever prepared it? NO. Mostly because other family members (either my mama, sister, or aunt) already took on the task of preparing the dish for a large gathering. I usually cooked the collards and opened the cranberry sauce.

What is a single sister to do? Go to Pinterest for a recipe. And do you know what popped



up in my search for “Thanksgiving dressing”? Stuffing (insert eye roll here).

I stuff Christmas stockings, not my Thanksgiving meal. NO, I have never had “stuffing” because I eat dressing. Truthfully, the previous sentence is the same thing as saying I've never had a “pop”, when I enjoy soda or “coke” or “drank” as some may generalize a flavored beverage. These food terminologies can be viewed as traditional southern slang, depending on what household you were raised.

After looking at Pinterest, my internet research deepened. To my surprise, there is a difference between stuffing and dressing. Stuffing can be used to stuff any food. You have stuffed fish and shrimp, stuffed birds, even stuffed potatoes. But for Thanksgiving, specifically, stuffing is a mix of what's going in the turkey's nether regions. A wide variety of breads can be

used for the base, such as crackers, croissants, day old bread, or even a mix, etc. Said mix is not usually viewed as a key side dish but more so an edible garnish.

Dressing, on the other hand, is a cornbread-based dish, with its own serving plate and utensils. And it really doesn't have to “go in that part” of the bird. Beloved dressing is not a mere garnish. It can be likened to the “Beyoncé” of the Thanksgiving meal, with macaroni and cheese and collard greens to round out Thanksgiving's “Destiny's Child trio.”

So, I came to the estimation that Thanksgiving dressing is a southern Black dish. I then confirmed that I'm right. The delicious dish has roots in Africa, initially called “kusha”. During slavery, it evolved to kush – cooked corn mush or crumbled corn bread. After this history lesson, I became even more determined to get the dish right.

In Jackson's Facebook Foodie

group, I asked other members what restaurant has the best dressing. Several answered: Sugar's. Mrs. Glenda Barner, owner of Sugar's, and I have had discussions on soul food before. So when I asked could she share a quick tutorial on the dish, she was happy to give a few tips and share some recipes. One tip she shared is to not solely depend on the premade broths for your flavor. “The best broth available is made of turkey wings and turkey tails. They have great fat content which makes your dressing rich,” she said.

Well reader, as I take on the dish this year, I can't promise you I will get it right. I am, however, confident that I now know I don't eat or make stuffing. I get dressed for Thanksgiving. In these trying times, I encourage you to do the same – make memories and remain thankful for every blessing, even in a COVID-stuffed 2020.

#### SUGAR'S CORNBREAD DRESSING

- Pan of cornbread
- 4 slices of toasted bread
- 4 turkey wings
- 4 turkey tails (if available), makes broth richer
- 1 qt Swanson's chicken stock
- 1 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 2 cans of Cream of Chicken soup
- 3 beaten eggs
- 1 stick butter
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Accent
- Garlic powder

Boil turkey wings and tails with 1/2 cup chopped onion and 1/2 cup chopped celery. Season with salt, black pepper, Accent, and garlic powder. Cover with water in a large pot. You want lots of water because this is your broth you will use. Sauté 1 cup of onion and 1 cup of celery in butter till soft. Set to the side. In a large bowl, add toasted bread and cover with broth and tear apart. (Don't stir hard. Use a spatula with a fold-in motion.) Crumble in some of the cornbread. Add more broth, more bread, and more broth. Add sautéed onions and celery. Add Cream of Chicken soup. Taste and add seasonings if needed. You want to have a semi-thick consistency. Add beaten eggs. Spray baking dish with non-stick cooking spray and pour in the dressing mix. Bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes or until set and starting to brown. Don't dry it out. Cool and enjoy with cranberry sauce and gravy if desired.

#### CHICKEN GRAVY

- Cream of Chicken soup
- Broth or water to loosen
- 2 boiled eggs chopped
- Season to taste. Heat and enjoy.

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