Would You Like Beetroot with That?

by Alison Grambs

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NO TURKEY???" I have never sent an angrier text in my life. *Ping!*

"We are having my famous Native American pumpkin chili," Mother just texted back. "You liked it last year."

No. I did not like it last year! In fact, I did not like her famous Native American pumpkin chili soooo much last year that I had politely excused myself from the table, raced into the kitchen under the guise of needing a glass of water, and promptly shoveled the chili into the family dog's bowl. If I recall correctly, even the family dog, who eats her own poop, wanted nothing to do with Mother's famous Native American pumpkin chili. She wanted turkey.

"But it won't be Thanksgiving w/o turkey!" I am texting back to my mom now with trembling hands.

Ping! Snotty response? "Check your history. Turkey has very little to do with the "First Thanksgiving."

Oh really? We'll see about that! Now I'm on Wikipedia. Page titled "Thanksgiving (United States)." Hmmmm. Let's see. I bet there are like, a gazillion references to turkey being the staple of the 'First Thanksgiving'. Let's see...

"The feast consisted of fish (cod, eels, and bass..." Eel? Gross! "...and shellfish (clams, lobster, and mussels)..." That's weird. Hmmmm. Still searching..."...wild fowl (ducks, geese, swans and..." I am breathing in, slow and steady, praying to every Wikipedia god for the next word to be...

BINGO!

"...turkey!"

Ah-ha! Filled with a confidence usually reserved for someone who has won a gold medal at the Olympics, I am texting back. "Mother, I will have you know that Wikipedia clearly states 'turkey' was on the menu at the First Thanksgiving!" *Ping!* Another text from Mother - most assuredly admitting her defeat.

"Daughter, I will have you know that, at one point, Wikipedia also stated that John Quincy Adams was a Foundling Father..." Grrrr. Damn that Michele Bachmann! But I'm not giving up that easily. My eyes continue scanning the Wikipedia page.

"...venison, berries and fruit, vegetables (peas, pumping, beetroot and possibly, wild or cultivated onion), harvest grains (barley and wheat), and the Three Sisters: beans, dried Indian maize, and squash."

Hmmm. Interesting. No mention of a big, crusty pot of tasteless slop!

"I don't see the word 'chili' in there at all," I am tapping back to my soon-to-be-defeated maternal unit, my face barely able to restrain the wide grin spreading across it as I add several exclamation points to my text for effect.

Ping! She's written back. "You will eat what I serve." Oh, no I won't!

Ping! A text from my friend, Lydia, is coming in now. "We got a puppy!"

Whatever. I don't have time for reports of happiness of any kind. My favorite holiday is on the verge of being ruined. I need Lydia's emotional support. "My mom is refusing to cook a turkey for Thanksgiving. Can u believe that?" *Ping!*

"Lemme guess. She's serving her famous Native American pumpkin chili again?" Yes! Yes! I knew Lydia would understand my pain and suffering! Now I have formed an impenetrable alliance against all things pumpkin and chili. "Isn't it despicable!" I am texting back. "Who eats chili on Thanksgiving? It's madness!"

Ping! Another text from my mom. "If you'd like, daughter, I can add some beetroot to my famous Native American pumpkin chili. (Hee hee.)" Snarling now. Yeah, yeah, real funny.

Ping! Text from Lydia. "Mama Grambs rocks! She's saving another turkey's life!"

Nooooo! Noooooo! This is wrong – wrong on so many levels. I want to text back to Lydia that I hope her new puppy pees all over her turkey this Thanksgiving, but I resist. My texting fingers fly across the virtual keyboard of my smart-enough-not-to-eat-pumpkin-chili smart phone.

"My mom is a pumpkin killer." On a roll, I text the pumpkin killer again. "Pleeeeeeeese? Please can we have turkey?"

Ping! She's written back immediately.

"No! It's too much work."
Ping! (She's still going.)
"And you never help with the preparation."
Ping! (Still going)
"Or the clean up."
Ping! (Still going)
"We are having Native American pumpkin chili..."
Ping! (Still going)
"With beetroot."

Ugh. I am now defeated. My dreams have been vanquished, just like the Native Americans of the Great Plains. Such a cruel irony. I am sighing, if you can't hear it. Time to break the pumpkin chili news to my husband. The right thing to do is call him at work, but the easier thing to do is text him the horrible news.

"So sorry, honey. But Mom says we r having her icky Native American pumpkin chili again for Thanksgiving dinner this year." *Ping!* Man, that was fast. "R U FK%KING KIDDING ME??!! TELL ME U R FK%KING KIDDING ME? I WANT TURKEY! NOT HER FAMOUS INDIAN PUMPKIN CHILI!" Listen, pal, I'm thinking as I text back. I understand your anger here - my world has been turned upside down, too, here-but let's not be politically incorrect about this. "The proper term for it is 'famous Native American pumpkin chili,' honey. Not 'famous Indian pumpkin chili.'"

Ping! My husband types fast when he's been betrayed. "No. The proper term for it is 'crap.'"

I can practically feel my husband's tear drops through our sweet, love-laden text exchange. It's too much to bear. I sign off for I, too, want to cry, as my mind is spinning right now with images of last year's 'traditional' Thanksgiving. No delicious scent of crispy turkey skin roasted to perfection floating in the air. No festive fight over who gets the white meat and who gets the dark. No gloriously browned turkey legs to tear into. No wishbone to snap for good luck. This is unacceptable. That's it. Time to pull out all the stops. Texting my mom again.

"Mother! Tommy says he'll kill himself, if we don't have turkey!" *Ping!* "Then I guess Tommy won't be alive for kickoff..."

How can she be so cavalier? My mom knows full-well that my husband's sole purpose in waking up every Thanksgiving is to slather himself in turkey juice and then plant himself on the sofa, bloated and fatigued, to watch the big Thanksgiving Day football game.

Ping! Lydia is back. "Ask ur mom for the recipe for her famous Native American pumpkin chili. Think I'm gonna make it this year!" Delete. Delete. Delete. I want not a single remnant of this traitor's texts in my phone. Should I give it one more try?

Sure. "What if I cook the turkey, Mother? You don't have to do a thing. I promise!"
Waiting...
Waiting...

Ping! "Fine." Score! My faith in humanity has been restored! Thanksgiving has been saved!

Ping! "But your father and I want no part of your turkey. Your father and I want my famous Native American pumpkin chili." Oh sure, I'm snickering. You just wait, Pocahontas. The minute you see my famous this-has-no-pumpkin-or-beetroot-in-it turkey, you're gonna want some. Trust me.

Time to text my husband the good news. "Honey! Good news! Mom says we can have turkey as long as I cook it! YAY!" *Ping!* It's Lydia. "Good luck with that, honey..." Ooops. Wrong person.

Texting it again. *Ping!* A happy text back from my husband. "YUM!"

Ping! Lydia again. "BTW: Have u ever cooked a turkey... honey?" Well, no. I have not. But how hard can it be? "I will be fine. Go kill some innocent pumpkins, traitor." Turkey shmurkey. You just buy the darn thing, stick it in the oven, and eat, right?

Ping! Lydia again. "U have no idea what u r in a, jackass..." What does she mean, 'in for'? Google-ing how to cook a turkey now. Looks straightforward enough. And who, pray tell, is she calling a 'jackass'? Flipping through the websites now. There's how to choose the right bird. How to defrost the bird. How to wash the bird.

Ping! Mom again. "If you change your mind, there'll be plenty of my famous Native American pumpkin chili on the table." No. I put my phone down in defiance. I want no part of your travesty of culinary justice, you pumpkin chili she-devil! I want turkey.

Pages and pages of turkey cooking information on the Internet. Yippee! Everything I need to know. I'm so excited. How to pick a turkey. How to weight a turkey. How to season a turkey. How to stuff a turkey. How to baste a turkey. How to remove the giblets from the...

Huh. What's this? There's something about me having to stick my hand way up the turkey's slimy rectum and pull stuff out of it.

Picking up my phone again. "Mother?" *Ping!* "Yes?"

It hurts to admit what I am typing now. But not as much as it would hurt to stick my hand up a turkey's slimy rectum.

"Will I like beetroot in that famous Native American pumpkin chili of yours?"

Alison is the author of ***"The Man Translator: Your Essential Guide to Manland"*** *and* ***"The Smart Girl's Guide To Getting Even"****, a couple of children's joke books and works at the Friars Club in New York City.*

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Happy Thanksgiving!

Duckhorn Merlot
Veuve Clicquot Pink Champagne

Caviar Pie & Salted Crackers
Assorted French Cheeses & Sliced Apples

Perfect Roast Turkey
Smokey Sweet Potato Souffle
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Pumpkin Pie
Deep Dish Apple Pie
Cherry Pie
Gingerbread

Brandy & Coffee

Senator Biden's Favorite Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

1 cup shortening or butter
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
1½ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon salt
3 cups old fashioned oats
1 cup raisins
nuts (optional)

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