Christmas Eve Spaghetti Feast

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Christmas Eve Spaghetti Feast
Foodways: Calendar Custom

Informant
Allison Allred was born and raised in Syracuse Utah. She is 20 years old and currently lives in Logan, Utah. She works for Utah State University’s Conference Center. She is a Junior majoring in Journalism with minors in Political Science and Marketing. She is the oldest of 3 children in her family. She is my roommate.

Context
I interviewed Allison in her bedroom in our apartment in Logan, Utah. She was sitting on her bed and I sat on her desk chair nearby. It was about 6 PM on Sunday night and she was about to buckle down and get some homework done. It was snowing cold outside so she was comfortably wrapped up in a blanket. A few of our other roommates were home, but they were in their own rooms so we were alone in Allison’s room. It was a quiet evening. We were the only two chatting. Allison’s custom takes place every Christmas Eve since she can remember. It most often takes place in the dining room of her maternal grandparents’ house in Farmington, Utah. There have been 1 or 2 years when gathering at her grandparents’ house wasn’t possible, so Allison’s immediate family ate spaghetti in their kitchen in Syracuse. However, the usual setting of the custom is in Farmington. Allison usually arrives to her grandma’s house around 4 or 5 in the evening, and the family sits down to eat a few minutes after arriving. Eating takes an hour or two, and then everybody chats until they all go home around 8 PM. All her mom’s side of the family attends; there are usually 3 or 4 families there. The ages of the participants span over 60 years. Friends never attend, it is a strictly family event. Allison’s grandma is the one who makes the spaghetti; if anybody else tried to make it there would be an uprising. However, the meal is always ready by the time families arrive so cooking the spaghetti is not really part of Allison’s custom. Because there are little kids present and it’s Christmas Eve, some of Allison’s uncles will go downstairs into the basement and ring jingle bells to trick their children into voluntarily going home early in preparation for Santa Clause. Allison is the oldest grandchild in her family, so she will occasionally help clean up afterwards.

Text
Every year on Christmas Eve my whole family gets together. So, my mom’s side of the family, um, and we get together and we always have spaghetti on Christmas Eve, like my grandma always makes spaghetti. And then after that, we all open, like, our pajamas, and I know that pajamas are pretty typical but I’ve heard spaghetti is kind of weird. And it’s a tradition that’s just been passed down- like my grandma’s mom did it, and her mom did it, and it’s like, really
traveled down the family line so. It’s just something that we always do. Even if we don’t go to my grandparents’ for some reason, we still do it, like, as an immediate family so wherever we are and whatever we’re doing we usually find a way to have spaghetti on Christmas Eve.

**Texture**

As Allison told me about this tradition, she was happy and relaxed; the atmosphere was laidback and easygoing. As she started to tell me about her custom, she got really excited and it became obvious that she was proud of and fond of this tradition. She used a lot of hand gestures to explain it to me and went into a lot of detail. She spoke loudly and quickly and seemed to enjoy reminiscing about it. During the dinner, the atmosphere is loud and festive and jovial. Everybody is talking to each other across the table and asking for food to be passed to them and overall having a jolly time. This tradition is important to her and she looks forward to it every year. She told me that she enjoys this Christmas Eve meal more than she even likes Christmas Day, and she plans to continue this tradition for her whole life. She also likes that even on years when her aunts and uncles go to their spouses’ families for Christmas, they still come to Christmas Eve dinner. This custom holds a lot of value for Allison.