Deep Fried Turkey

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Deep Fried Turkey
Foodways: Calendar Custom

Informant
Anika Peterson was born and raised in Lindon, Utah. She is 19 years old and is currently a student at Utah State University in Logan, Utah. She is a sophomore studying Business Finance at the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business. She works concessions for Sundance Ski Resort and thoroughly enjoys cooking. She is a middle child. She is one of my roommates.

Context
I interviewed Anika on a Sunday night while we were eating dinner and discussing how excited we were for Thanksgiving Break. We were the only two people in the kitchen; the atmosphere was quiet and relaxed as the rest of our roommates were either doing homework or were not home. She sat across the table from me as we ate and talked. Anika explained that deep frying a turkey for Thanksgiving is too large of an undertaking to do in a kitchen, so she always does it outside in the driveway of her childhood home in Pleasant Grove—regardless of weather. They never have Thanksgiving at anybody else’s house so that they can deep-fry the turkey. The turkey goes in a large pot that sits on top of cardboard to protect the driveway from the oil. The only people trusted with the task are her father and her; although the turkey feeds upwards of 40 family members and family friends, only Anika and her dad fry the turkey. Her mom cooks all the rest of the food in the house, and all other family members and friends visit with each other until the food is ready. The same family members and friends attend every year. The Thanksgiving meal at Anika’s house begins at 1:30 PM, so deep-frying the turkey starts around 10 AM. Usually, 2 to 3 turkeys are deep-fried so that there is enough for lunch, dinner, and leftovers.

Text
My family celebrates Thanksgiving every year at our house, we don’t switch off and go to other people’s Thanksgivings or whatever. Every year Thanksgiving is at our house for the solid reason that we deep-fry our turkeys. I can’t remember the exact degree, but you get all of the oil, and basically you have to put cardboard down because it can spill and that will stain your driveway- if it’s windy, you need to take that into account. You never deep-fry a turkey inside because you’ll start a fire. Umm basically you check it every once in a while by pulling it halfway out and sticking your little thermometer in there and if it’s a normal temperature for the inside of a turkey then you’re good to go!
Texture
Anika was very proud of this tradition and happily elaborated on the details. She remembered one year when they made both deep-fried turkey and oven-roasted turkey, but said that it was anonymously agreed that the deep-fried turkey was much better. She related this to me with a little bit of disdain, revealing her attitude that the advantages deep-fried turkey has over all other turkey should be obvious. She even told me that “if you’re going to gorge yourself, you might as well deep-fry it.” Her attitude while describing how she and her dad deep-fry the turkey was authoritative and serious; she is the only person learning how her dad deep-fries their Thanksgiving turkey so she feels responsible to become well-versed in this custom. Anika seemed to really value this tradition and liked that all her family and friends share in it as well. Thanksgiving wouldn’t really be Thanksgiving for Anika without deep-frying a turkey with her dad. As she and her dad deep-fry the turkey, they chat with each other and the atmosphere is one of relaxation and bonding. Although there is pressure to produce a delicious turkey, Anika and her dad are never very stressed about it.