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Meatfest

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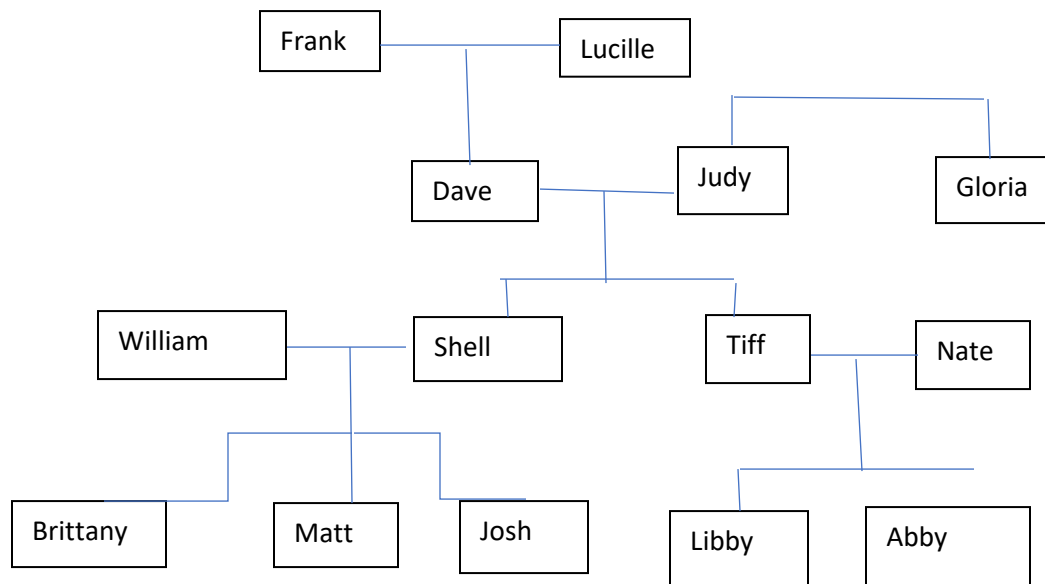


Myself
Logan, Utah
November 14, 2018

"Meatfest" Calendar Custom

Informant: My name is Brittany Fitzgerald. I am a 19-year-old undergraduate student in my third semester at USU. I was born in Layton, Utah, and primarily grew up between there and Syracuse, excepting approximately a year during which my family lived in Livermore, California. I was raised Mormon, and most of the extended family I have contact with are active in the church as well. For most of my life I have lived within an hour's drive of most of my extended family, on both sides, and am generally close with all of my aunts, uncles, cousins, and the two great-aunts who regularly attend family functions.

Context:



Family Tree of Relevant people

Meatfest does not have a defined date, but it always takes place on a Sunday during the summer break from school. The exact weekend is determined by when Gloria takes her yearly trip down from her home in Minnesota. Occasionally an extra person or two will attend, like my grandpa's brothers and their wives, some of their children, or Nate's youngest sister Kristi, but always in attendance are my grandparents, their two daughters and their spouses, the five grandchildren, and Gloria. It only happens once a year, and only at my grandparents home. With the exception of Gloria, everyone lives within an hour's drive of Layton, Utah during the summer. Some of the meat is usually provided by Nate, who is an avid hunter.

Text:

- Story:

My great-grandmother Lucille ("Great Nanny") passed away in May of 2009 after a lengthy decline due to dementia. Her death was neither sudden nor unexpected. A couple weeks later, the funeral was held; my grandpa's two brothers live a bit further afield, but he and my grandma live very close to the Kaysville cemetery where Great Nanny is buried. Although initially there were no plans for a reception after the funeral, just hanging around the cemetery chatting, everyone started to get hungry. My grandmother, a natural hostess, conferred briefly with my mom, aunt, great aunt, and the one or two others who lived nearby to confirm that they could source enough food to feed everyone on such short notice, and then invited everyone to come to her house in an hour for a lunch.

During their conference, the conversation apparently ran in the direction of, "If I invited everyone back for lunch do you have some food you could bring?" The only person to actually state what they would be bringing was my aunt, whose contribution was to run to Costco for several veggie platters. Everyone else agreed to contribute food, but never stated what they would contribute.

When everyone arrived at my grandparents' house with their contribution, they realized this, because between their offerings and the contents of my grandma's freezer they had chicken breasts, a ham, a selection of lunchmeats, and hamburgers and hot dogs for the grill. They were able to throw together a salad and my aunt's veggie platters, but the lunch ended up being almost all meat.

The next year my dad and uncle suggested we repeat the 'meat-fest', and we've had the event every summer since.

- The goal of meatfest is to have as many different types of meat as possible. Pre-packaged lunch meats do not count. Historically this has included:
 - Salmon (plain and teriyaki)
 - Hamburgers and hot dogs
 - Bratwurst
 - Chicken breasts
 - Turkey
 - Bear (shot by Nate)
 - Venison (also Nate)
 - Bacon-wrapped elk medallions (Nate's most important contribution, which I ask for specifically every year)
 - Chicken wings
 - Shrimp
 - Ribs (beef, pork, or both)
 - A ham
 - Steak
 - Rotisserie chicken

Generally a year averages 10-13 different meats. It has to achieve double digits, or it doesn't count. We'd have to reschedule or run out to get more meat. Extensive pre-planning and preliminary meat counts are undertaken to prevent this.

- Once everyone is assembled at the table, my grandpa gives a little speech about Great Nanny and family togetherness, and we announce the final count of meats. There is at least one friendly argument before the prayer over the meat count, usually between my dad and Nate, joined by whoever feels in the mood for it and otherwise ignored. Points of contention usually include whether the same meat dressed multiple ways counts as one or more; does fish count as a meat; do different cuts of meat from the same animal count as multiples (chicken breast vs. chicken wing, etc.); does the same cut of meat from different animals have to be counted as one item (beef and pork ribs, usually); and do combo items like bacon-wrapped elk count as one or two items. The result does not matter, but is usually in favor of whatever gives the highest meat count.
- After the meal, there is much groaning and Nate complains about the "meat sweats", and we split up to chat inside or play games outside. The outside games generally start out as actual games, like badminton and croquet, and devolve into something with no rules that is either dangerously competitive or technically probably some kind of hazing ritual. The most common victim is Josh, because he's the youngest and also a great sport. If we don't play it, "Josh runs around with an empty box over his head while we all throw whiffle balls at him" will at least be mentioned.

Texture:

The point of meatfest is textually remembrance and family bonding, and subtextually excess and dumb stunts, but everything is done with humor, and no one ever intends to cause hurt feelings. It is also subject to the same events as any other event celebrated by a Sunday dinner at my grandparents' house. These include:

- Abby saying something archetypically "dumb blonde", such as announcing her plan to become a Mormon stripper.
- Tiff giving herself a heart attack worrying that one of the food sensitivities (we collectively have two diabetics, a celiac, a severe nut allergy, three minor dairy allergies, and several sensitive stomachs) will be triggered and send someone to the emergency room. No one has ever had to go to the emergency room, and some of the disasters she envisions shouldn't even be possible (there are no nuts on the table nine times out of ten).
- Everyone antagonizes the dogs; originally my grandparents' late toy poodle Webster, now his successor (of the same breed), Elliot, and my cousins' Yorkie Oliver "Ollie" Leroy. The dogs are always sure that if they run into people's toes enough someone will drop something, and *this* time no one will take their prize away!
 - Nate will emphasize that you should call Ollie by his full name.
 - Someone will point out that technically they had Ollie's tags misprinted to say "Oiver" and never fixed it. We all make fun of Ollie.
- My dad (the Celiac) asks someone to pass him the rolls. Josh gets compared to Grandpa Frank, Great Nanny's husband, because he will always insist that he's on his second roll, even though it's probably his seventh.
- The Seating Chart:
 - The seating chart isn't official, and we always act like we might mix it up, but we never do.

- Libby had meningitis when she and I were 11 and 18 months old, respectively, resulting in a long stay at Primary Children's and her losing all of the hearing in her left ear. I still forget, sit on her bad side, and try to whisper with her.
- Josh is always awkwardly on the corner of the table, even though we could fit him in normally



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