



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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TEAM CHARLESTON MEMBERS GIVE THANKS IN MANY WAYS

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. -- An early morning football game, shrimp cocktail and champagne for an appetizer, lobster for dinner and cake cooked in a hole in the ground; Team Charleston members bring their own traditions to the holiday season.

Pilgrims and Wampanoag Indians celebrated the first harvest celebration in 1621. Their feast consisted of wild turkeys, geese, deer, lobsters, oysters, cucumbers, carrots, cabbages, turnips, corn and wild fruits.

The American holiday has now reached global proportions. Military members have traveled the world and shown other cultures this feast of thanks.

Although some have changed from the traditional first meal, one Team Charleston member goes back to the roots of Thanksgiving.

Airman Jennifer Morgan, 437th Communications Squadron Commander's Support Staff personnelist, is called Nanaazbah, or the One Who Walks Around the War Camp, by her family. Every Thanksgiving, her family goes to her grandmother's house on a reservation in New Mexico. Morgan's family belongs to the Little Water Chapter of the Navajo tribe.

Dinner is in a hogan, an eight-sided mud house, and starts with a traditional prayer and song. Then the elders, the grandmother and grandfather, talk about family issues and what is expected of the family.

For dinner, Morgan's family has fried bread (tortilla dough cooked in grease), tortillas, blue corn mush (corn meal and ashes boiled together), turkey, ham, mutton and earth cake.

Morgan said she enjoys her traditional Thanksgiving because it gives her a chance to be with her family.

"It gives me a chance to appreciate my family," said Morgan. "The rest of the year we're too busy doing other things, but Thanksgiving gives us a chance for everyone to come together."

But traditions have changed since the first Thanksgiving Day. Now families gather from across the country to celebrate together or a few friends join each other to show thanks.

Staff Sgt. Todd Novak, 437th Logistics Readiness Squadron Distribution Flight Readiness Spares Package supervisor, said he and three of his friends invited airmen from their shops who may not have anything to do for Thanksgiving Day.

"We don't want them to sit at home or go to the (dining facility)," said Novak. "We know it's hard for airmen to take leave, so we want them to come over and be part of it."

The day will start with an early morning football game, said Novak. Afterward, everyone will go back to Novak's house and begin cooking.

"Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday of the year because you get a bunch of friends and family together with a lot of food, and it's a really relaxing atmosphere," said Novak. "For the past few years, my roommate and I have been going over to other friends' houses and it seemed to work well."

While many have developed new traditions while serving the military, others try to incorporate two separate traditions into one.

Capt. Aaron Reed, Area Defense Counsel, is celebrating his second Thanksgiving with his wife and can still remember his Thanksgivings in Indiana with his family.

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“Before I was married, my mother’s family would get together every year at my parents’ house,” said Reed. “In the morning, my dad, my brothers, a few of my cousins and I would go hunting.”

After hunting, Reed said shrimp cocktail and champagne would be set out for the family when they rolled into town.

“I always loved the shrimp cocktail and champagne,” said Reed. “Since I grew up in the middle of Indiana, having seafood was very special.”

Now that Reed is married, he said the traditions have changed a bit.

“Last year was our first year, and we didn’t go back to my family’s house,” said Reed. “My wife’s parents came here and had dinner in Charleston.”

This year, Reed and his wife will be going to her family’s house, and they will try to alternate every year after that.

While some Team Charleston members have a very traditional way of celebrating Thanksgiving, others couldn’t be further from it.

Airman 1st Class John Greif, 437th Maintenance Squadron Maintenance Flight Aero Repair Shop technician, is from Ambergris Caye, a 25-mile-long, one-mile-wide island off the coast of Belize in Central America.

Greif said Thanksgiving was not celebrated on his island until his grandmother brought it back from America. She lived in Kentucky for a few years after marrying an Air Force pilot. When she moved back to the island, she brought the holiday back with her.

“She showed us what Americans did for Thanksgiving,” said Greif. “I always thought it was funny, celebrating an American holiday when we were on a British colony, which falls under the queen.”

Greif said his family never ate turkey, because on an island, they primarily ate seafood. So his family decided to form their own traditional meal.

“We would have barbecues and normal cookouts on the beach,” said Greif. “We would have homemade barbecue pits made out of 50-gallon drums cut in half, and we would cook any kind of seafood you could imagine.

“The whole family comes out to celebrate,” continued Greif. “Since the whole island is your family, the event is a big thing, but it’s not a national holiday.”

While many think Thanksgiving is just turkey, football and family, Team Charleston members show others that there are many ways to show one is thankful.

(Story by Airman 1st Class Amy Perry. This story is public domain. You may use any part of it for your publication or newscast. Interviews are available with key base personnel on this project. For more information, please call Capt. Krista Carlos at (843) 963-5589 or Staff Sgt. Jason Smith at 963-5537.)