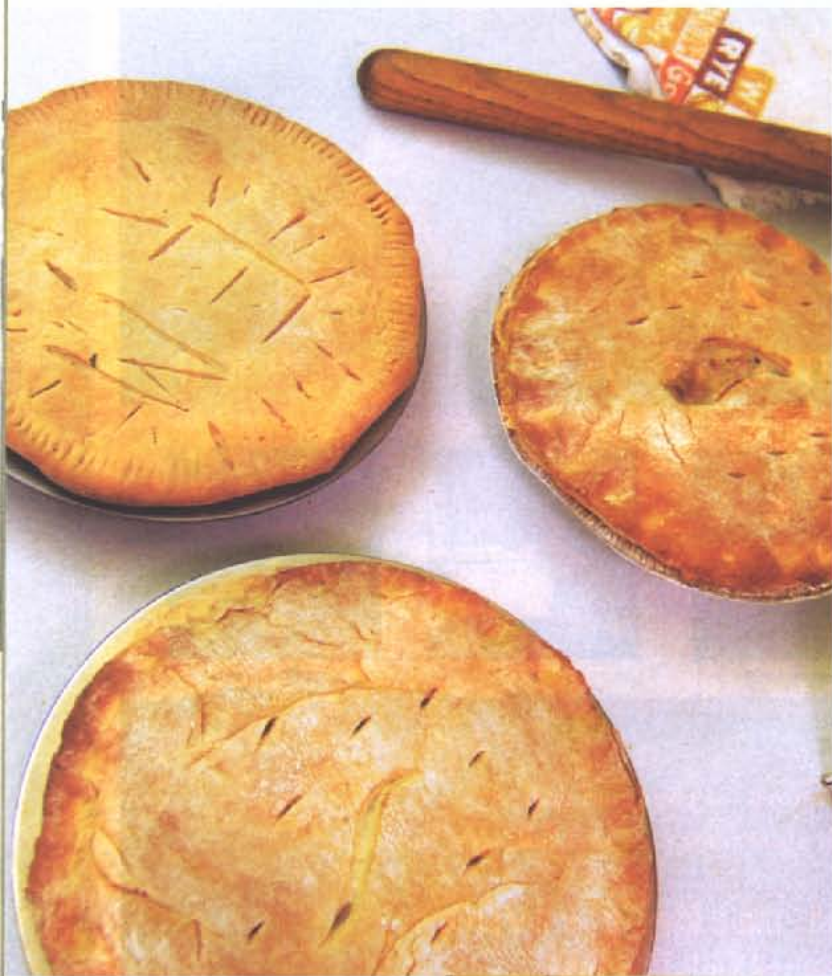


Turkey Pie Forever

HOPKINTON'S FOLKSY FALL FEED



Many cooks and many pies make this church supper a perennial hit. Photographs by Sara Lynch (2)



IF YOU ASK MEMBERS OF HOPKINTON'S CONGREGATIONAL church how long they have been making turkey pies for their annual fundraiser supper, they will say forever. Actually, the event dates back about 40 years, to the late 1960s. Churchwomen make 40 to 50 pies every year—that's almost 2,000 since the supper's inception.

"We serve 150 people if we're lucky. It depends on the weather and what else is going on in the community," says Debbie Bagnato, president of the church's women's fellowship. "It's a community thing," says church member Jody Eakins. Preparation "involves 25 to 30 people at least."

"People used to make turkey or chicken pies in their homes and bring them to church," remembers Evangeline "Vangie" Rorke, 92, a congregant for six decades. "In the early 1900s turkey and chicken pie suppers were free-will offering," says Linda Daby, church historian and chief potato-peeler. "The Catholics originally had chicken pie suppers but they gave them up."

Today the meal costs seven dollars but is free for kids age five and under. Whole pies cost \$10 and can be ordered the day of the supper. Take-out is available. "We won't turn anyone who wants a pie away," says Bagnato.

The supper is always on the second Saturday of September. "People look forward to it," says Bagnato. "They come from Massena, Potsdam and the Falls [St. Regis]. It's always different people every year."

In early September church members solicit donations of three large boxes of Bisquick, 20 pounds of frozen peas and carrots, two gallons of whole milk and four packages of turkey gravy mix, as well as 60 pounds of potatoes, two pounds of coffee, two pounds of margarine, homemade coleslaw, three large cans of cranberry sauce and eight homemade cakes (chocolate, white, spice and marble). The turkey pie is served with mashed potatoes, coleslaw and cranberry sauce. Everything except the cranberry sauce and surplus gravy is homemade. "The only thing we buy are the turkeys," says Margaret Zahler, 74, vice-president of the fellowship.

The church rents the 137-year-old Hopkinton town hall, on the town green

on Route 11B, for \$90, a fee that covers heat and gas. "In 1918, renting the town hall [for early fundraisers] cost \$3.50," says Daby. "Our church doesn't have a banquet hall, but we're luckier than some, because we have a town hall." Patty Lewin advertises the event in the free traders, on local radio stations and on posters hung around Hopkinton, Brasher Falls, Winthrop and Potsdam.

The turkey pie supper is one of the church's biggest fundraisers, raising \$800 to \$1,200 every year. "With the price of electricity and fuel, Lord knows we need the funds," says Eakins.

THE DAY BEFORE THE SUPPER, THREE 20-pound turkeys are seasoned, cooked, deboned and diced at the homes of three volunteers. Pan drippings are saved to make gravy. The cooks boil the bones and giblets for additional broth. "It's a lot of work, especially the day before, when you cook the turkey and remove the bones," explains Zahler.

At 1 p.m. the next day, women gather at the town hall. They form assembly lines to make pies and peel potatoes. Sometimes cooks cut their initials in the crust for fun. "When you make so many, you have to use your imagination," says Eakins.

No one knows the origin of the recipe. "They call it a recipe, but it's all in our heads," says Joyce Olson, who rolls out most of the crusts. "I've trained countless people." (Olson died since being interviewed last year.)

Workers include Joyce Gardner, Marlene Peck and Lois Patten, among many others. The men join in to lift heavy potato pots, drain them and mash the contents by hand. Chuck Eakins, Dave Patten, Dave McKnight, Dick Daby, the Reverend Charles Gardner and others set up tables and chairs. Children help set the tables. When the supper begins at 5 p.m., men pour hot drinks, and teens pour cold drinks and keep cranberry dishes filled.

Zahler and her granddaughter Marjorie Meashaw make gravy. "We never have enough," admits Zahler, so they supplement with the mix. She is also teaching Meashaw how to make the pies.

"My mother did it for 30 years," says

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KITCHEN

Bagnato. Her mom, 70-year-old Edith Norman, still works at the turkey pie supper, and so does Bagnato's sister, Sue Weems. Weems, Lewin, Dave and Esther McKnight, Reverend Gardner and others do dishes by hand. Weems has been chief dishwasher for the last few years. "Mom forced us into labor when we were teenagers," she says, laughing.

The pies are baked five at a time and are ready by about 4:30 p.m. The supper starts at 5 p.m., and dishes are put away by 7. "It has to be, my NASCAR race is on then," says Jody Eakins.

Hopkinton Congregational Church will celebrate its bicentennial in 2008, and it looks like the turkey pie supper will be a part of its next century. This year's event is September 8. Call (315) 328-4684 for more information.

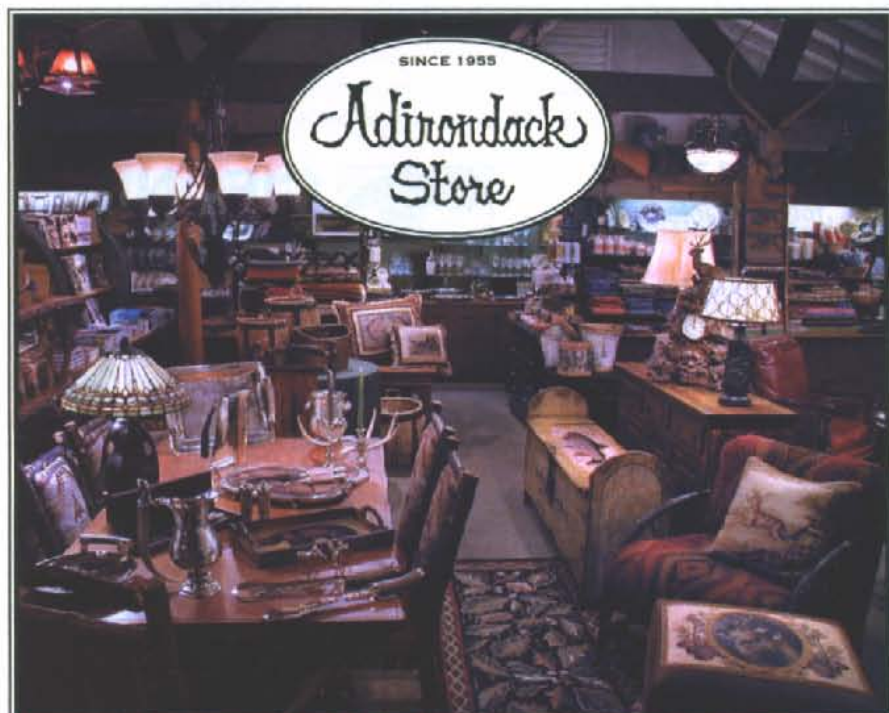
Turkey Pie Recipe

2 cups Bisquick
2/3 cup whole milk
1 cup peas and diced carrots,
cooked
2 cups diced turkey, cooked
About 2 cups turkey gravy, cooled
Salt and season turkey and gravy
to taste

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix Bisquick and milk well. Flour a board, rolling pin and your hands. Divide the dough in two. Roll out half of the dough and slip it onto a pie plate with a spatula. (The secret of a fluffy crust is the dough must be sticky.)

Mix vegetables and meat in a bowl. Fill the pie with the mixture. Roll out the rest of the dough. Pour enough gravy to cover the filling. Put the top crust on and crimp the edges. Poke steam holes with a fork. Bake about 30 minutes, until lightly browned. Serve with additional gravy. Serves six.

This is a good way to use leftover turkey. Boil bones and giblets for stock to make gravy. Melt two tablespoons of butter or margarine for each cup of broth you have, add the same amount of flour as butter and stir on low heat, adding broth until it thickens. Cooling the gravy before adding it thickens it and prevents a soggy crust. 🍁



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