

# The Dressing Of A Turkey

By Karen Van Antwerp



Thanksgiving is a time to stop and give “thanks” for all we have...

As children we learned how the Native American Indians and the first Pilgrims celebrated a meal together during the fall harvest in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The modern version of Thanksgiving is different for everyone, and old and new traditions are celebrated. Living abroad has made this holiday even closer to my heart as it is part of the adventure to carry on traditions from my family as well as make new ones with my husband. Of all the American holidays, Thanksgiving is my favorite!

In Detroit, our family traditions went beyond just a meal. We celebrated by attending the American Thanksgiving Parade during the wee hours of the morning. Then came the “great meal” where we all stuffed our faces at my parents’ house with friends and relatives. And while in the food coma, we would then either watch the Detroit Lions play football or discuss shopping for the best bargains on Black Friday.

Living abroad you learn to be creative in how you celebrate Thanksgiving. While it may be impossible to recreate the exact American Thanksgiving meal since many ingredients are different here, I have found incorporating local foods to be a nice way to celebrate as well as create new traditions.

For both my husband and me, Thanksgiving is still very special. We celebrate on the Thursday, usually with a few friends. While it has taken me a few years, I have learned to make everything from scratch. We prefer chicken to turkey now and no stuffing or cranberry sauce. As for the bird, it must be fresh from the local Metzger. We have also incorporated a few German items into our menu like my mother-in-law’s famous red cabbage dish and a cucumber and cream salad along with the delicious German bread. We also don’t over-eat during our meal like we did in the USA. I guess that is part of the expat experience...or perhaps we are

just getting older and wiser! The turkey flag still flies outside the home, and we still eat a delicious meal. One year we were asked by our neighbor if ALL Americans fly a turkey flag on Thanksgiving? Our response, “OF COURSE they do.” Grin and a wink!

One problem I struggled with during our first Thanksgiving abroad was where to buy everything, from Libby’s canned pumpkin and Stove Top stuffing to a fresh turkey. A simple stop at the grocery store to pick up a few staples is a daunting task in a foreign country where the labels are in a different language. That first year I didn’t find everything I needed, and we settled on a frozen pre-stuffed turkey from Aldi with side dishes of potatoes, salad, and an apple pie for dessert. Lesson learned, plan early!

Planning ahead is important if you intend to make a traditional meal. I recommend you make a list at least two months in

advance. You simply need the time to source where to get all of your ingredients and order them in advance. In my case I also need to translate everything on my list into German and then figure out the weight of ingredients needed.

I have found using hand gestures at the Metzger as to how big a bird you wish to have is not the way natives ask for a whole chicken or turkey. So make sure to write down the amount in kilos versus pounds on a sticky note when you walk into the Metzgerei. Plus, the typical German oven is much smaller than the one I had in the U.S., so make sure to measure your oven at least once before you buy a large turkey or chicken. As I always say, I am still learning my German language as well as the proper customs!

At the end of this article is a list of resources as to where to buy ingredients or to order your turkey. I tend to buy things online if possible instead of going all over town to find one or two specialty items. Thus I like having options. In addition, over the years, I have found both YouTube and Pinterest wonderful resources for planning and preparing the meals. I am no Martha Stewart, yet I enjoy going online for ideas. I also have a few weathered cookbooks to reference from home. These well-travelled cookbooks have cracked bindings and pages dusted with traces of flour.

### **New traditions, a different day, what Thanksgiving means...**

I interviewed a few AWCD members regarding how they observe the holiday here in Düsseldorf. Each member had a different perspective as each of us is from a different region of

the U.S. Several members I spoke with share the holiday with their German friends, not necessarily expats.

Kate Getty commented, "It's my favorite holiday. I've usually done everything from scratch except for pumpkin pie. I found canned pumpkin here last year. But everything else I've improvised and done homemade: stuffing, green bean casserole, pie crusts, cranberry sauce, sweet potato casserole, pecan pie (using the German version of corn syrup). Last year I did two small turkeys. As a side note, my from scratch attempts have not always turned out so great (the green bean casserole was "interesting") But it's better than no Thanksgiving."



Ve Mellinghaus had a different perspective and started a new tradition of celebrating on the weekend. "I do everything from scratch, so I don't have a store that I go to. My husband's best friend is also married to an American, so we trade off on traveling to one another, and we celebrate together. They are in Berlin... I guess our biggest change is that we don't celebrate on Thursday any longer, it has moved to Saturday for us. My friend is from Maryland, so our traditions are a bit different. She always makes a broccoli casserole each year (mother's recipe) and I always make a

### **In the Düsseldorf area, here are a few suggestions of places to buy that special food for your holiday:**

The fresh food market Carlsplatz in the Altstadt is a wonderful resource for fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry, fish, flowers, sweets, etc  
[www.carlsplatz.de/index.html](http://www.carlsplatz.de/index.html)

Another option is to order your bird by visiting the Seltmann Turkey Farm in Krefeld. They also travel with their products to weekly markets in different towns throughout the area.  
[www.truthahnfarm-seltmann.de/](http://www.truthahnfarm-seltmann.de/)

For those who wish to use American products there are different resources available in both stores and online:

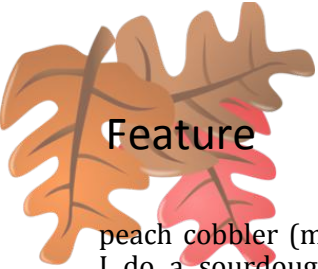
American-British Foods  
 Corneliusstrasse 45  
 40215 Düsseldorf  
 Website: [www.ab-foods.de](http://www.ab-foods.de)

The International Store  
 Renneperstr 30  
 41366 Schwalmthal  
 Delivery in Düsseldorf  
 Website: [foodfromhome.de](http://foodfromhome.de)

If you don't mind a drive...  
 The English Shop  
 An St. Agatha 41 (central)  
 50667 Cologne  
 Tel. 0 221 257 85 55  
 Website: [english-shop.com](http://english-shop.com)

USA Import Shop (online only)  
 Free shipping with purchase of 50 Euro or more.  
[usa-import-shop.de](http://usa-import-shop.de)

There is also the option of going to the Netherlands. The main grocery store there is called Albert Heijn and has a light blue AH logo. The Dutch stores carry more American products than here, and you can find them within approximately a 30 minute drive.



## Feature

peach cobbler (mother's recipe). I do a sourdough dressing and she does a white bread dressing. ... the best part was when she took her children back to celebrate Thanksgiving for the first time in Maryland... They were a bit confused, because all of the food was different and there was no cobbler."

KiKi Ragab celebrates on Thanksgiving Day. She and her husband make a more traditional meal. " He cooked the whole dinner one year. He got the turkey from Metro and he made salad and stuffing from scratch; he likes it pretty traditional. We also skipped the canned cranberry." There are two different stores in the Düsseldorf area she has used in the past for items. Both American-British Foods as well as Foods from



Home carry American food. While they are both similar, Foods from Home tended to carry more British brands.

Elaine Terlinden commented that "I usually cook for German friends who have an American connection. I still like to do it on THE day (Thursday) vs. on/over the weekend, which is not easy for those who work. I also like to attend one of the German-American organization's Thanksgiving Dinner events - over the last few years the DAFN Duisburg, and in past years GAS Wuppertal. And, I have been trying to do a Tex-Mex Thanksgiving in-home event."

However you choose to celebrate Thanksgiving, I wish you a wonderful holiday!

## The International Couples Group and Boda Weinhaus Present an Evening of French Wine & Cuisine!

Cost: 25 Euro, includes a light French 3 course meal & tasting wines.

After the wine tasting you will have the opportunity to purchase wine, with a percentage donated to charity.

For more information and to register, see the AWCD website.

Saturday, September 13, 2014

7:30pm

BODA WEINHAUS

In der Beek 33

42113 Wuppertal



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WWW.BODA-WEINSHOP.DE