

Hundreds gather to break bread at early Thanksgiving

By Kathryn Reed

Oh, the aromas. There is something so incredibly distinctive about the flavors of Thanksgiving dinner melding together. It should be bottled to be experienced more than once a year.

Spilling onto the sidewalk was a line Monday night to get this meal.

With expectations of serving more than 300 people, the Bread & Broth crew arrived at the kitchen of St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe at 10am Nov. 22. About 25 hours of prep time had gone into the meal before the nearly four-dozen volunteers started work Monday.



Richard Carpenter says a lot of people are in dire need, but pride doesn't allow them to admit it. Photos/Kathryn Reed

This was Michael Giordano's first year in the kitchen. Friday

was all about spending seven hours chopping 47 loaves of bread for stuffing. (See recipe below.) He wanted to help make a difference in the lives of people who don't necessarily know where their next meal will come from.

"You see it in their face, they say thank you," Giordano said from the kitchen as he watched the line of people fill their plates with all the traditional fixings.

Richard Carpenter can't say enough good things about his first Thanksgiving dinner at Bread & Broth.

"This was awesome," he said scraping leftovers into a container to take home to those who couldn't make it to the meal. "It couldn't have gotten better if you made it yourself at home."

Carpenter has been coming to the Monday night dinners for about six months. He's out of work. He's being evicted. He has no money to put gas in his truck. And yet, his brown eyes are warm and soft, seeming to contradict the harsh reality of his current state of affairs.

He's lived in South Lake Tahoe for 22 years, first coming here from San Jose to help build Embassy Suites.

Carpenter is sitting with friends – a father with his 18-year-old son. They are quiet. The teen wants to work but can't find any. The father needs meds from having had hernia surgery. He doesn't have the \$40 for the pills.

But their stomachs are full. At least this one night.

John Tussey has been in the area for 16 years. He comes every Monday for this hot meal that is served free by this nonprofit that relies on food and monetary donations from the community to keep it going.

Last year about 250 people came for the Thanksgiving meal. The need keeps growing. Not just this night, but most Mondays.

“We are seeing some new faces and some familiar faces,” said Diane Weidinger, ringleader of Bread & Broth and head chef.

Dinner rolls donated from Sugar Pine Bakery sit on a baking sheet next to a massive container of homemade cranberries. Apple and pumpkin pies have arrived at a bargain price from the Barton Café. Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care has donated fruit and vegetables. Raley’s had a big delivery Monday.

Weidinger only has one complaint about the dinner – the use of instant mashed potatoes.

Still, those seated at the long dining tables don’t mind. Not a morsel is left on their plates.

The following is from Diane Weidinger, the force behind Bread & Broth.

I make stuffing once a year, for 300 people. This recipe is for 12 cups, a normal size amount for a family meal. Naturally, I use my Heart Rock Herb & Spice Poultry/Dressing spice blend.

Classic American Bread Stuffing Bread & Broth Style

24 slices of bread (white, wheat, multi grain mixture is the best)

1 lb. sweet Italian or sage pork sausage (a combo is nice) cooked

2 C celery ribs, finely chopped

1 C large onion, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ C carrots, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ C chopped fresh parsley

$1\frac{1}{2}$ T poultry seasoning

1 tsp salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ C dried cranberries

2 large eggs, beaten

$\frac{1}{4}$ lb. (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

$\frac{1}{2}$ C warm chicken broth and water

Cut bread into 1-inch pieces (it cuts easier if slightly frozen), toast on a cookie sheet pan in a 300 degree until dry, take care not to burn them. Sauté, using some of the sausage fat along with butter, the onions, celery and carrots until soft, starting with the celery and carrots first as they take a bit longer than the onions. Mix the bread, cooked sausage and vegetables, poultry seasoning, salt/pepper, and cranberries in a large bowl. Tossing with clean hands works the best. Drizzle the eggs over the bread mixture and toss again. Mix the butter and chicken broth together and drizzle over the bread mixture. Continue to add warm water, a little at a time, until the stuffing is moist and just holds together when lightly pressed between the palms of your hands. Turn into a buttered baking dish, cover and bake for 45 minutes or until hot through (325 degree oven). Take off foil the last five minutes for a slightly crusty top.

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