

THANKS BE FOR MICHIGAN'S BOUNTY — BETTER LOAD UP FOR ANOTHER TOUGH WINTER

Yesterday, Michael Whitney linked to a flawed Thanksgiving quiz, as it seemed to be missing the correct answer on most questions. My answers, if given a choice, would read:



1: What time do you start eating dinner?

A: Around 2, when you start panicking about the Kitties losing and so stress-eat all the bacon off the top of the turkey.

2: How much do you eat during the day leading up to dinner. A: See answer to #1.

3: Do you believe in eating appetizers before dinner? A: See answer to #1 and #2.

6: To baste or not to baste? A: Bacon.

11: What's your take on turkey? A: Bacon.

An explanation for those of you who aren't familiar with my family's tradition: rather than

wrestling with brine or basting with whatever one bastes with, we just load the whole thing up with bacon when we put the bird in the oven and pick it off after a few hours, which leaves the bird nicely seasoned and ready to brown. And it's not even a new thing: my family has been doing this for generations, apparently. Though that fancy weave look in the picture is a newfangled approach my brother used on his turkey last year.

My own personal Thanksgiving tradition is to attempt to eat all Michigan products for Thanksgiving (generally allowing exceptions for citrus and spice, though this year I forgot to get MI-milled flour), and post thanks to some of the ones either you should know about or to whom I am particularly grateful.

The last several years of my tribute to MI posts have focused on the extent crazy weather is already challenging the farmers who bring us our food. While last fall brought a generous harvest, the year before everyone was struggling with drought. This year, farmers seem to be dreading what is expected to be another really cold winter. One of new favorite MI wineries, 2 Lads, made only two wines this year (the Polar Vortex Vintage), preferring not to overharvest given predictions of another harsh winter. Most



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one of two fruit farmers I used to buy from lost everything and decided to retire (the other lost their peach harvest for the season). And our meat farmers spent most of last winter concocting up things to feed their cattle (like molasses) to get their metabolism up high enough

to stay warm though last year's frigid temperatures.

We'll be having 2 Lads Pinot Noir D. Cuvée and Verterra Unoaked Chardonnay (the latter of which we haven't tried though we've become hooked on their cool weather whites). The 2 lads of the name, by the way, are (as several of Michigan's winemakers are) South Africans and both ruggers, so they've named all their wine vessels after rugby positions. My first year of rugby I was a fullback, just like the vat of Pinot Noir in the picture.

Both the turkey and the bacon come from Crane Dance Farm. We've been buying most of our meat and eggs – when the hens aren't taking the winter off, which they did early this year – from Crane Dance Farm since we got to W MI. When my large animal vet father-in-law visited from Ireland, Jill and Mary showed him around the farm so I could convince him that not all American meat is grown in horrible industrial conditions. He came away thinking they'd find the Irish farms he used to work with industrial scale by comparison.

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as long. Charlie Ham showed up at the market the other day – a sign of winter, since he sends the local kids during the growing season – and it was like a rock star with everyone greeting him.

Two big changes in the Grand Rapids foodie scene this year. First, so many people have grown addicted to Hilhof dairy products that on every Thursday (delivery day) folks scramble to buy up

what cream is available from the 3 stores in the neighborhood that carry it. Also, Downtown Market opened last year. Not only do we finally have a great fishmonger now (the Fish Lads), but we stole one of Zingerman's bakers, who now runs Field and Fire. My bread stuffing came from stale leftovers from the latter.

The big new addition to my Thanksgiving table are my very own Jerusalem artichokes. I've been using them in my stuffing for years (because they're a damn sight easier to work with than chestnuts and have a similar taste and texture). So this spring I threw a few in the ground. Hooboy, I hope I don't grow to regret this! After chopping down the 10' plants I discovered I had grown a sink full of the things. Let's hope my sand storage technique keeps the rest through the winter.

It's snowing pretty heavily, the sidewalks are icy, but I'm just going to batten down and watch some football.

Thanks to all of you for sharing our work over the last year.