Thankfulness – the No. 1 ingredient in a feast for 300

By Kathryn Reed

Vegetables keep being washed. Knives don't seem to stop. Bread comes and goes from the oven. Cranberries whir in the food processor.

It's Sunday afternoon and the kitchen at Grace Hall in South Lake Tahoe is a bevy of activity in preparation for tonight's annual community Thanksgiving dinner. With 275 people served last year, it's anticipated 325 could come through the doors today from 4-5:30pm.

William Wagener adds veggies to what will become turkey stock. Photos/Kathryn Reed

While cooking for so many is serious business, everyone in the kitchen is having fun. Laughter fills the air along with aromas from the stove. Some of the crew are regulars on Mondays to help with the weekly Bread & Broth dinners – people like John Mauriello and William Wagener. Others help on special occasions – like Billy Marchetti, Ellen Nadreau and

Mark Nadreau.

Diane Weidinger is the maestro in the kitchen, while her right-hand woman is Kathi Olsen.

Everyone on Nov. 20 expresses gratitude for being able to give back – a thankfulness to be part of something special and meaningful.

A woman stops by asking if she can volunteer. Because she has her serve safe certification she's given an apron and put on orange detail. She's in tears when she arrives and tears when she leaves.

"You guys help me way more than I helped you. You made may day," Jennifer says. Out of work, she's been at Bread & Broth the previous two Mondays for the free hot meal.

When it comes to the food for tonight, Weidinger said, "Thanksgiving is always about tradition."

Turkey, stuffing, yams, pumpkin pie – are just some of the items on the menu.

Tips are given – like put some lemon juice or white wine on the mushrooms to keep them fresh. Some volunteers are professionals in the restaurant business, while others just like to be in the kitchen working. The regulars say they are always learning something. At times they are the ones creating the menu Monday nights.

It was the stuffing and fresh cranberries that were being assembled yesterday.

Onions, carrots, celery – all chopped in order to be sautéed. Loaves and loaves of bread cut into (large, by some standards) bite-size pieces for stuffing.

Oranges were zested for the cranberry relish.

The cranberry concoction is one of the first dishes Marchetti learned to cook in culinary school in 1977.

Cranberry Orange Relish

4 C fresh cranberries, rinsed

¾ C sugar

1 whole orange

½ tsp fresh grated ginger

Blanch cranberries for five minutes, chill.

Peel the orange. Reserve the sections, remove the thick white pith and reserve the zest.

Combine the cranberries, sugar, orange zest and ginger. Pulse in a food processor until chunky. Chill and serve.

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Bread & Broth's 23rd annual Thanksgiving feast is today from 4-5:30pm for anyone. St. Theresa Church is located at 1041 Lyons Ave. in South Lake Tahoe.

While Bread & Broth has an arsenal of about 100 volunteers and does not need to expand right now, what it does need is people or businesses to participate in the Adopt A Day program. This is where for $250 a Monday night meal (other than Thanksgiving) is supplied to about 100 people, with four people from the business helping in the kitchen. For more information, contact Connie Blue at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

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