

People are what matter most on Thanksgiving

By Corey Mintz, New York Times

TORONTO — In Canada, where I'm from, Thanksgiving is over already. We celebrated on your Columbus Day, and if it offers any solace as you grow increasingly (or maybe just a little bit) anxious in these final hours, ours turned out fine.

We ate pretty much the same things you will cook tomorrow. I'm sure your menu and your meal will be swell. But I am here to argue that it matters less than you imagine.

Over the last few years, I've held 201 dinner parties for a newspaper column up here (mine, actually) called Fed. I've learned that the food is less important than the company and a little bit of graciousness. Call it hospitality, or entertaining.

A generation of food television, with its ticking clocks and well-lit close-ups, has brainwashed us into believing dinner is a competition. Our manners have atrophied. We are now willing to put so much thought and effort into what we eat — making cronuts at home, name-checking the latest hot restaurants, leading a torch-and-pitchfork mob against gluten — that we've lost our understanding of how to eat with people.

We have been reduced to a society of boors by stripping dinner of joy in our attempts to reproduce complicated chef food in our homes.

If I were to offer Thanksgiving advice, it wouldn't be about what kind of bird to buy or which dessert to bake. It would be to remember that you are hosting a version of a dinner party, and that the same etiquette — taking your guests' coats and getting them a drink, making them feel comfortable, feeding

them in a timely manner, serving food with confidence and ending the evening on a high note – is just as appreciated by your family as by anyone else you would bring to your table. Maybe more.

The focus should be on making your guests feel good. At Thanksgiving, you have two advantages: knowing everyone pretty well and the theme of expressing gratitude. It's a good time to tell your sister not just that she looks great with bangs, but also that you appreciate her watching the kids.

Bottom line: make people feel welcome, appreciated and a little special.

Read the whole story