You’re making sure Vermont neighbors can enjoy holiday meals and memories.

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

Fall 2021

- Creating Lasting, Joyful Memories p. 2
- Gratitude is a Two Way Street p.3-5
- What the Holidays are All About p.6
- A Special Seasonal Recipe p.7

Vermont Foodbank

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VTFOODBANK.ORG
2020 was a hard year for holiday traditions. As I write this, the country is struggling with the Delta variant of coronavirus, and I hope that by the time you're reading this we're able to be with families and friends, safely sharing holiday meals and memories.

Speaking of meals and memories, with all the creative ways people are preparing the traditional holiday turkey — deep-fried, spatchcocked, smoked — I think there's a trend away from cooking stuffing inside the bird? It makes me think of my late stepfather, Dick Holden, who made the best oyster stuffing I've ever had, in the bird. So moist, salty, and savory. Served alongside his sweet and tangy cranberry chutney (made at least a month in advance), it truly made for a feast.

As so many Vermont families continue on the long, hard path back from COVID losses and trauma, a family tradition of feeding your neighbors by donating to the Vermont Foodbank makes sure all Vermont families can renew existing traditions and build new ones that will create lasting, joyful memories.

Thanks for all you do!

John Sayles
CEO
It’s a cool, rainy day in Springfield, Vermont. In a parking lot, rows of cars line up to pick up fresh produce at the monthly VeggieVanGo food distribution that you help support. Hundreds have come out for the event, as has been the case since the start of COVID-19 well over a year ago.

The cars pull to a stop. Drivers let volunteers know how many families they’re picking up for. The scramble begins. This week, community members are receiving cucumbers, apples, onions, eggs, sour cream, yogurt, and other fresh vegetables.

“They’ve got turnips! I love turnips,” a woman exclaims as she slows to a stop and pops her trunk to allow the smiling, rain-soaked volunteers to load her car with food. “Thank you!” she hollers as the trunk closes.

And then it’s a volunteer’s voice heard over the sound of trunks closing and friendly banter.

“Hey, it’s Pie Guy!”

Just pulling up is a man who everyone at the Springfield distribution knows as Pie Guy. A soft-spoken “hello” and a bright smile come from the driver-side window. On the passenger seat sits a freshly baked apple pie decorated with artful, pie crust maple leaves.

William the Pie Guy, who retired and moved to the area 11 years ago for “quiet living,” lives with his brother close by.

In Windsor County, Pie Guy picks up fresh fruits and veggies monthly from the free produce distribution in his area. He uses the food to feed his family — and to bake a homemade treat that he delivers to distribution volunteers each month.

Continue reading on page 4
William comes to the VeggieVanGo, that you help make possible, each month to pick up food and says he relies on the fruits, vegetables, and other items to feed his family.

“I’ll cook the turnips with the potatoes if we get potatoes and stuff, or carrots, and I’ll make some kind of dish with some kind of meat that I have at home in the freezer,” he says. “Whatever they gave out I try to work with, like a lot of onions, I made French onion soup for the family.”

And William always makes a treat for the volunteers helping to distribute food. Typically, it’s a pie, but William says he makes the treats based on what he receives, and sometimes, the food is better suited to other recipes.

“I might switch over to cheesecake once in a while, and tarts, cherry tarts I bring over, and probably zucchini bread,” William says. “Once they gave me a whole bunch of zucchini so I made zucchini bread, and they loved that too… They’re giving out food, why not give back. What they give out, I give back.”

Jim, one of the regular volunteers, confirmed that statement.

“He’s got great pies,” Jim says with a big smile. “The Pie Guy is a fixture at this stop. He’s always kind enough to bring us a pie.”

Jim explains that he’s gotten to know a lot of the people who come to this produce distribution and other sites he volunteers at around the region. Looking out over the parking lot of cars, rain dripping from his yellow slicker, Jim says he’s thankful for the opportunity to help his community. And, he says, the gratitude is always palpable at distributions.

“[The community members are] thankful for everything we’re able to provide to them,” Jim says. “Pie Guy just happens to be one person who actually brings a pie, but there’s been others who brought volunteers coffees on cold winter days. The majority of these people are very happy for all that we’re able to give to them, and that’s why we do this. We do this to help our communities and help our neighbors. That’s why we do it.”
And in this small community, as is true throughout Vermont, there’s been a lot of need over the past year. Sandy works at Springfield Hospital and organizes the VeggieVanGo distribution in the area. As she directs seven lanes of traffic through a maze of orange cones, she reflects on March 2020 and the quick move of distributions from the hospital to a new location.

“We couldn’t manage all of these vehicles up there. I think I wasn’t aware of just how much need there was until we moved down here,” she says, her arm constantly in motion, waving cars up to the distribution point.

Standing next to crates of apples being bagged and brought to the cars inching their way through the distribution, Jim shares he’s also been affected by the amount of need he’s seeing in the community.

“It takes your breath away when you come to a VeggieVanGo and see 500 families getting food,” he says. “You’re making a difference in peoples’ lives, that’s what it’s about.”

As for Pie Guy, he said his pies are a way for him to say thank you to the volunteers. And as the holiday season approaches, William says he’s looking forward to the pies he’ll bring the volunteers as Thanksgiving gets nearer.

“Probably pumpkin, pumpkin pie,” he says. “It’s traditional, pumpkin.”

But on this day, it’s apple pie that he’s delivering, a sweet offering of gratitude for the friends he’s come to know at the Springfield site. And he feels the appreciation from volunteers. “When I bring over the apple pie … they love it, they love the design, they love the apples.”

And, volunteers pause, and are reminded of the power of community every time Pie Guy pulls through the line.
With her family trying to get by on one income, Crystal wasn’t sure her young daughter would get to experience a Thanksgiving meal. Thanks to friends like you, they’ll be able to celebrate around a full and festive table.

Thanksgiving has been feeling bittersweet for Crystal and her daughter Eva.

Little Eva has a mouthful of new teeth, but Crystal has been worried that there might not be a holiday meal for her to try them on. Crystal shares that she lost her job waitressing, and while her husband is still working, his salary is just enough to pay the family’s bills every month. There isn’t much left for food.

“Our budget is really tight every month,” says Crystal.

With the holidays coming up, she knew she needed a little extra help. So Crystal visited a food distribution and was able to bring home the food she needed to make sure her family would have a festive holiday meal this year.

“We probably wouldn’t be doing Thanksgiving if it weren’t for this,” Crystal explains. “This means we get to have a nice meal as a family, which we wouldn’t be able to afford otherwise.”

Crystal not only got a turkey for the family, she also got holiday sides — carrots, green beans, stuffing, and mashed potatoes.

“I’m proud that for Eva … we’ll be able to share what the holidays are all about: family,” she says.

Stories like this are true for families across Vermont and around the country. Because of your care for your community, neighbors still recovering from the impacts of the pandemic will be able to enjoy a nourishing meal this holiday season. Thank you!
A seasonal recipe from VT Fresh

This butternut squash recipe is perfect for a chilly fall day. The soup is both savory and sweet, and a great way to add some nourishing warmth to your Thanksgiving meal. You can substitute acorn or kabocha squash, or even pie pumpkins depending on what you have available. This cozy dish will bring color and joy to your table.

Instructions

Heat oven to 425°F. Coat halved squash with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Cook cut-side up on a baking sheet. Roast until tender, about 50 minutes to 1 hour.

In a large pot, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat. Sauté onions until soft, about 3–4 minutes, adding a pinch of salt as they cook. Stir in garlic, pepper, and any additional seasoning, and cook for 1 more minute.

When the squash is ready, scoop out the insides and place in a blender, with stock, in batches (or mash together in a pot). Add squash/stock puree to a pot with the cooked ingredients, add maple syrup, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer. Remove the pan from the heat. Top with cream, toasted nuts, croutons, or grated cheese if desired!

Ingredients

- 1 butternut (or other winter squash), halved lengthwise and seeds removed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3-4 cups vegetable stock (or chicken broth)
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup, brown sugar, or honey (optional)
- 1 tablespoon dried sage or thyme (optional)

Roasted Butternut Squash Soup

Looking for more Thanksgiving meal inspiration? Check out a holiday menu featuring some of our favorite dishes, vtfoodbank.org/holidaymenu. For everyday recipes, visit Cooking With VT Fresh. Each recipe highlights a fruit or vegetable grown in Vermont, along with simple ingredients. You’ll find seasonal recipes, including many kid-approved dishes! Test a VT Fresh recipe and be entered to win a $100 gift card.
A Holiday Feast for us all
Give the perfect gift

Instead of presents, consider making a donation in honor of a friend, family member, or colleague. **For every $35 you donate, we’ll send you a blank, special edition holiday card you can mail to someone special this holiday season.**

This year’s card art, titled “Alpenglow on Vermont’s Green Mountains” was donated by Vermont artist Ashley Wolff.

*All proceeds from this holiday card benefit the Vermont Foodbank and help provide food to friends and neighbors who are struggling with hunger.*

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Phone Number: (______)______________ E-mail: _______________________

Amount Enclosed $____________ Please enclose a minimum gift of $35 per card

Charge my (check one): ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Discover

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**PLEASE NOTE:** To ensure that your holiday gift card arrives to you before December 25th, please mail your form to us by December 9th.

Thank you for giving the gift of meals to Vermont neighbors this holiday season.