

What's up with New Orleans deep fried turkey?

Ahh, it's that time of year when people start thinking about the holiday festivities, especially the holiday meal. Yes, many holiday meals do include ham or lamb as the main course, but turkey is still king. For many the ritual begins with digging out the roasting pan from the back of the cupboard and deciding if the turkey is going to be stuffed or not. But, in New Orleans, it isn't a roasting pan that is dug out, it's the crawfish pot. Where many others look forward to roasted turkey with all the trimming, New Orleanians look forward to their deep-fried turkey.

Since being in New Orleans, I have noticed the people love their fried foods. They embrace it with the same devotion as a beloved grandparent. In other parts of the country alternatives are sought to decrease fried foods in the diet, but in New Orleans the opposite is true; if it starts out tasting good, it will be even better deep fried. So how does this work with turkey? Turkey starts out being a healthy choice, low in saturated fat, calories and sodium, but what happens when you deep fry it verses roasting it?

Roasted turkey can be injected with a marinade, but is usually rubbed with herbs and spices before placing it in the roasting pan. It is then loving basted several times over the course of the 3-5 hours that it takes to roast it. The best part of it is the aroma that permeates thought out the house, making one's saliva glands juice up with the anticipation of that first succulent bite. Oh, did I mention the pan drippings that make fantastic gravymmmm. In comparison with a roasted turkey, a deep fried turkey is usually prepared with a marinade and placed in a pot with 3-5 gallons of peanut oil that has been bought to a temperature of 375 F. Deep fried turkeys only take 3-5 minutes per pound to cook; so in 30 minutes to an hour, the bird is ready for the table.

Nutritionally a roasted turkey has roughly 290 calories, 8 grams total fat, and 119mg sodium per 6 ounce serving. A deep fried turkey has an estimated 383 calories, 21 grams fat, and 1116mg sodium per 6 ounce serving. Of course, the amount of sodium depends on the seasonings used, but New Orleans is known for its strong flavors.

The south usually has a slower pace of lifestyle. Some good things take time to perfect. This is reflected in some of New Orleans's most famous dishes: gumbo and red beans. It's the slow simmering that gives these dishes their trademark taste. Why not do this for turkey?

With the high rate of obesity, hypertension, and diabetes in New Orleans, I say go back to your roots New Orleans. When it comes to food, slow cooking is best. Besides, with a deep fried turkey, where's the aroma permeating the air, where's the slow build of anticipation and where is the gravy?