

By Kylee Baumle

Turkey, cranberry salad, pumpkins (and pies made from them!) – these make us think of Thanksgiving, and so does a cornucopia. I'm not sure my kids would know just what a cornucopia is, although I know they've seen it. They'd probably just call it a basket of fruits and vegetables.

What exactly is a cornucopia anyway? Why the unusual name for an unusually shaped container of edibles? And what does it have to do with Thanksgiving? I decided to do a little sleuthing to find out.

The word "cornucopia" is an old one, dating back to the 5th century B.C. It comes from the Latin for two words, "cornu" means horn and "copia" means plenty. Put them together and you have the other common name (in English) for a cornucopia, horn of plenty. As is usually the case when discovering the root meanings of words, this explains why a cornucopia is filled with a lot of vegetables, fruits, and grains, to the point of overflowing.

The shape of the container, usually a basket, is a very distinctive and recognizable element of a cornucopia. It is said to originate in Greek mythology as the hollowed out horn of a goat owned by Zeus's nurse.

When Zeus was playing with the goat, he accidentally broke one of its horns. To atone for this, Zeus promised to always keep the horn filled with the goat's favorite fruits, thus a horn of plenty.

The cornucopia has come to symbolize the harvest and since many things are harvested in the fall, it is generally associated with autumn holidays, namely Thanksgiving. While we don't know for sure, it's likely that the first Thanksgiving in the United States could have had a cornucopia decorating the Pilgrims' table.

Then, it likely held seasonal fruits such as apples, vegetables like squash, and grains, including corn. Today, the basket sometimes is also decorated with fall flowers like mums and asters. Both then and now, the cornucopia is a symbolic celebration of the earth providing nourishment for its inhabitants.

Though Thanksgiving has at its heart an attitude of gratefulness for the blessings of the year, it is clearly a holiday centered around food. Across the country, meals are prepared with typical dishes served being roasted turkey, stuffing (or dressing), cranberry salad, and a favorite of many – pumpkin pie.

Many years ago, I prepared an alternative to pumpkin pie that has become a family favorite. While for many it's hard to imagine Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie, at our house, it wouldn't be Thanksgiving without my pumpkin torte. Whenever I serve it to someone for the first time, it never fails to elicit requests for the recipe. If you'd like to try a delicious alternative to pie, here it is:

KYLEE'S PUMPKIN

TORTE

1 yellow cake mix (take out 1 cup)

3 eggs

1 1/4 cups white sugar

3/4 cup butter

3/4 cup evaporated milk

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 large can pumpkin pie mix

Crust: Combine the cake mix (less 1 cup) with one egg and 1/2 cup butter. Press into the bottom of a greased jelly roll pan (10-1/2 x 15-1/2 x 1 inch).

Filling: Mix until smooth - pumpkin pie mix, 2 eggs, and evaporated milk. Pour on top of the crust.

Topping: Mix 1 cup cake mix, sugar, cinnamon and 1/4 cup butter. Sprinkle on top of the pumpkin mixture. Bake at 350°F for 45-50 minutes. Cut into squares and serve with whipped cream. Store in the refrigerator.

I wish you a blessed Thanksgiving.

Read Kylee's blog, Our Little Acre, at www.ourlittleacre.com and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre. Contact her at PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com.