

Giving thanks with a Cauli-turkey by Anu Bulusu



“Mom, what are we doing for Thanksgiving?” asked my seven-year-old son.

“It’s a long weekend, we will have four days off, shall we take a short vacation? Go somewhere?” I asked.

“I want a traditional Thanksgiving like my friends, can we please do that?” was the response.

We, as a Hindu-American family, always celebrated Holi with colors, Diwali with lights, and Ganesh Pooja with flowers. But it took a seven-year-old to remind us that we were American too. Yes, we should celebrate Thanksgiving. It makes perfect sense.

It is an occasion to gather family, share good food, make memories and offer thanks for all our blessings. Sounds just like any other holiday, but most importantly, it is the holiday for immigrants.

I started to plan our Thanksgiving. A large part of the festivities is the turkey. It felt that Thanksgiving wouldn’t be traditional if there were no turkey. The hitch? We are a vegetarian family. This troubled me for a quite a while. I hunted recipes for every other traditional Thanksgiving menu item – cranberry relish, green bean casserole, mashed sweet potato, pot pie, and I could easily make all of those. As Thanksgiving drew closer and closer, the missing turkey loomed large.

Finally, I hit upon an idea based on a recipe I saw on a website. I bought two medium cauliflowers, marinated and roasted them with some potatoes.

On Thanksgiving Day, we gathered our family, sat down to dinner, and my “cauli-turkey” made a proud appearance and the table.

The kids loved it! My husband thought it was hilarious, and our friends were very complimentary. The dinner started out with all of us laughing, some light-hearted teasing, and it set the tone for a wonderful meal.

Over the last ten years, the story of the “Cauli-turkey” has been shared and re-shared and it has become a bit of a local celebrity. All our friends, colleagues and neighbors know about it, and we have a steady stream of friends visiting on Thanksgiving Day, just stopping by for a bite and a chat. Two cauliflowers are no longer enough!