

The Tom WOODS Show

November 26, 2013

Foolproof Thanksgiving Turkey

Guest: Heather Woods

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Heather Woods is the mother of five daughters (four as of this episode), and is married to Tom.

T. WOODS: I went through a lot of my life eating turkey at people's houses, and it's super dry and you have to drown it with gravy even to make it edible. What are those people doing wrong? Or maybe a better question would be, what is the secret to not making it come out that way? What is it you're doing that every single time you prepare turkey for us, Thanksgiving or otherwise, it's been great, it's delicious? It's moist. It's the way turkey should be prepared. How are you doing this?

H. WOODS: Actually, growing up, when we had turkey on Thanksgiving, we thought it was normal for it to be so dry that it would shred when you tried to carve it. So, we never realized that's actually not a good thing, which is probably why most of us didn't like turkey. So then, fast forward, we got married, and I took a cooking class on just basic cooking things, and one of them was how to make a citrus chicken, I think. And that turned out so moist that it was kind of icky, so I thought it would work really well with a turkey.

So, basically, what you want to do with a turkey is you want to buy one that's no larger than twelve to thirteen pounds, because if it's larger than that, they tend to dry out because of the cooking time that's needed. So, about twelve to thirteen pounds. You want to get one that's not frozen, if that's possible. If it's frozen, it actually kind of deteriorates the quality of the meat as it's thawing out, and then you have to recook it, and it's just too much on the proteins. So you want to get a fresh turkey, and you're going to get it home and get it to room temperature, if you can, and stuff it—but not with bread.

T. WOODS: Ah! What are we putting in that turkey?

H. WOODS: You're going to take extra virgin olive oil, three oranges, and three yellow onions, and you're going to quarter the oranges and the onions. Then you'll take the oranges and squeeze the juice all over the turkey. Then you're going to stuff the rinds into the cavity itself and mix it with thyme and rosemary and salt. You throw that all in there. Put some olive oil in there. And then you basically do the same to the outside of the turkey, where you are infusing flavors, and you want to use, most likely, dried thyme and dried rosemary. But before you use those, you'll need to release the oils that are in there. Either you need to grind them up, or roll them between your fingers, or anything that sort of breaks them up and allows the oils to kind of come out, which will give it a deeper flavor.

T. WOODS: Now, you have here in your—I'm going to put on my site TomWoods.com a little page on turkey preparation, and you can be assured I had no input in this, thank heavens. I'm going to put my link to my wife's recipe for this at TomWoods.com/turkey. But why are you

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telling people not to baste their turkey? You're saying you should take your turkey baster and just throw it out the window. So the entire turkey basting industry is just a big scam?

H. WOODS: Yeah, actually, if you have a baster, you should probably put it in your blender and grind it up. I mean, they are absolutely useless. So, part of the secret to having an actually moist turkey—most people think if you baste it every twenty minutes or so that really helps reabsorb the juices, when actually that's completely false. So, first of all, every time you open your oven door, it lowers the temperature in your oven about thirty degrees, and so then your oven has to overheat in order to make up for that, and so going through that process, the turkey tends to dry out quite a bit. But also, after about fifteen to twenty minutes of being in the oven, the skin of the turkey will start crisping up, which then, therefore, is a barrier for any liquids getting back into the turkey. So you don't need to be up at five in the morning and checking your bird ever twenty minutes. It just doesn't work. Basically, the onions and the orange rinds are going to give it moisture from within and keep it all held in there.

T. WOODS: All right, let me make sure I'm understanding something, though. Just going back a little bit here. If you're telling me the citrus chicken recipe was where you got the idea to stuff the citrus into the turkey, then this really is the Woods family approach to turkey. I thought it was a recipe that maybe we'd found and we started to use, and since we have blogs and other people don't, we can sort of take credit for it, but you're telling me this kind of is the Woods family secret.

H. WOODS: Basically I tweaked it a little from the original chicken recipe and kind of just perfected it over the course of about a year, and there you go.

T. WOODS: Nice. All right. Now, once in a while we get people who say, "Oh, if you want to have a moist turkey, I've got just the route for you to take. You should brine—brine that bird. Brine this thing for twenty-four hours. Brine, brine, brine." Well, look. I'll tell you something. I know you don't need to brine it because I trust you and you tell me you don't need to brine it. But I'm going to let you in on something I've never told you before in all eleven years of marriage. I have no idea what brining is.

H. WOODS: [Laughter] Brining is usually the act of putting meat—in this case, a turkey—into a solution of different things. So it's basically a solution of liquid you put the turkey in, and you let it sit for twenty-four hours. The idea is the turkey soaks up all this liquid, so that when you bake it, it goes into the oven having more liquid than it needs anyway, so it stays moist. So the trouble with that is, it's really time consuming. So, it's at least 24 hours of prep and then cooking it, and who wants to do that? So, what our recipe calls for is: you buy your turkey and you put it in the oven, and two to three hours later, for approximately a 12-pound bird, it's done.

T. WOODS: All right, so why would you—even if brining is a super-duper idea for some other reason—if it takes all this extra time, and our process takes very little time, why would you make things more difficult? Is that what you're saying?

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H. WOODS: Yes. And I mean, you get the same result. It's not that our recipe would be less juicy. I mean it would be the same result, but our method is much less time intensive.

T. WOODS: Now what you're telling us about a turkey is so contrary to the conventional wisdom. First of all, no one thinks: all right, time to stuff my oranges into the turkey. I mean, people don't think about that to start with. But also telling us that we shouldn't be basting the turkey. Like, I would—if you had told me that, I would have just said, look, you don't know what you're talking about. I can't believe they would make a product that's so totally counterproductive to use. So are there other things in cooking other things, other than turkeys, where you've found there is some wisdom that you've uncovered in the kitchen, or that you learned in a course—and, by the way, if you can't think of anything, we'll just edit this question out; it's no problem. But is there anything else in which you have said, "You know what, I find that doing it this way, which is 180 degrees opposite from how other people do it, actually works better." Do you have anything else like that? Because we love that on this show. Do the opposite. You know, people say, do you have a common cold, then you should drink a lot of liquids. We say, drink no liquids. Well, we don't quite do that, but you see the example.

H. WOODS: Well, I don't know. I mean, I would think the examples that come to mind are actually with baking, which actually is more or less science than anything, because everything has to work just right. So, I've learned that setting out the butter and the eggs overnight give you a much better product, but you're told eggs are going to kill you if you leave them out for more than an hour, so most people won't do that because they're afraid of getting salmonella. And actually salmonella lives on the outside of the shell of the egg, so if you're worried about that, wash your egg before you crack it, but for the most part, having eggs and butter and fats at room temperature or maybe even slightly above, actually gives you a better product in the end.

T. WOODS: Now, see, this is one we actually fought over for eleven years. I say, "You're leaving the butter out. What's wrong with you?" And you say, "What's your problem?" Right? We fight about it.

H. WOODS: Yes, and then I would get up in the morning to make cookies or something and the butter was back in the refrigerator. It ruined my whole day.

T. WOODS: [Laughter] It's hard as a rock. You can't cook with it. You can't use it. You can't spread it on anything. Because Tom was in the kitchen. That's the big problem. All right, so your turkey secrets then have now been revealed. People can get them at TomWoods.com/turkey. But let's talk about this turkey who's sitting right here in front of the microphone. Now, when we—she's giving me this look like that's a terrible segue. All right, so when I put this up on Facebook—and you guys are following me on Facebook, right? [Facebook.com/ThomasEWoods](https://www.facebook.com/ThomasEWoods). Because we have good discussions there. We have a good group. There are not that many rude people. It's basically fun.

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So I posted a thread about what should I ask my wife about, while we're talking about turkey. What else can we talk about? And some people would say, "Well, talk about the Democrats." And I thought, "I don't want to talk about the Democrats. That's what we talk about all day, stuff like that. What else can we talk about?" So somebody said something like, "Well, what about her political views?" Or, "Did she think you were some kind of weirdo when you guys met and she found out just how crazy your views were?" And so I've never really gotten the answer to this question, until right this minute, going on the air, and, of course, since I am the audio engineer at the Tom Woods Show, anything that's said here can disappear down the Orwellian memory hole with the click of a mouse. But let's see what ol' Heather has to say. So what's your thought about all that stuff?

H. WOODS: Yeah, we try not to talk about that. No, I'm kidding. Yeah, so let's see. Our first actual date, I guess you would call it, was a three-hour phone call. You were in New York, and I was in Oklahoma, and I think about two hours and forty-five minutes of that call was—[Tom protests in the background] about Jethro Tull. First we talked about Jethro Tull and how amazing their music was, and I had never heard of them. But I wanted to not lose him, so I said, "Yeah, this would be great." So he sent me a tape. It was actually pretty good music.

T. WOODS: I did not talk to you about it on the phone.

H. WOODS: Yes, you did. And then we talked about the Mises Institute and Austrian economics.

T. WOODS: I did not talk to you about that! You're such a liar. We had emailed before then, talking about regular things, right?

H. WOODS: Sort of.

T. WOODS: We talked about some regular things.

H. WOODS: Oh, yeah? Like what?

T. WOODS: Oh, just life. You know. What are your likes? What are your dislikes? You know, we talked about all kinds of things. Like raising children. Right? So there wasn't much left to talk about at that point except praxeology.

H. WOODS: Yeah. Well, in fact, when I got off the phone, I said, "Mom, have you heard of this word 'praxeology'?" and she said, "There is no such word. Where did you come up with that?" So, anyway, that was interesting. I don't know. It wasn't weird. I thought it was really interesting because I didn't know anything about it.

T. WOODS: This is so weird. I insist to people that I am more normal than this sounds.

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H. WOODS: Well, now, after I married you, of course you are. But, I remember over the course of the next few years, while we did a lot of phone calls, he asked about how did I feel about the Republicans versus the Democrats, and I said—

T. WOODS: It was sort of a trick question.

H. WOODS: —Yeah. Jerk! Anyway, I had said I didn't really like either because they all seemed to be in the same group, but just focused on different things, and it was just a pain. And he said something along the lines of, "I'm so glad you said that." So, I guess some of my instincts were already in your camp, but because I was so young, I hadn't really developed theories around it at that point. So I definitely learned a lot, and some things have changed over the years, and some things have not.

T. WOODS: Well, I remember that early on, just because you wanted to know about stuff that I was involved in, you bought a bunch of books and read them. Now I'm going to make you embarrassed. But that's honorable. Of course it makes you seem awesome. I get that. But honestly, you read *Economics in One Lesson* and a bunch of other books like that, and you were kind of doing it on your own, and so because you were doing it on your own, one of the things you got was *The Theory of Money and Credit* by Mises, and I wish you had told me you were doing this because I would have said I haven't even read *The Theory of Money and Credit*. You know, if I can read Bob Murphy's study guide I feel satisfied with my accomplishment.

But then, of course, you and I were both very much involved in the Ron Paul campaigns both times, in 2008 and 2012. And you remember the night it was Paint the Town Ron? And we had a bunch of college kids. We had a minivan so we could fit a bunch of people in there, and we went around town, and what were we doing?

H. WOODS: Well, off the record.

T. WOODS: Well, they can't get us now.

H. WOODS: Yeah, we won't mention the town. You and I and some friends were actually out pretty late putting up Ron Paul signs around town, so that when people got up the next morning, they didn't know what had happened. But a lot of them said "Google Ron Paul," rather than just standard stuff. Whoever came up with that was really brilliant, because that got people talking all over town, and actually Googling Ron Paul.

T. WOODS: And somewhere, we have video of us driving around the next day saying, "Hey look at that sign. Look at that sign. Look at that sign." And then police would drive by and we'd be walking along, we would drive in our van and then stop, get out, do a sign. And as we'd be walking around with the signs, I remember there was one time the police drove by and as I saw them coming up on me, I just dropped the signs and kept on walking so he wouldn't even see me.

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H. WOODS: And I was in the back holding the hammer, thank you very much.

T. WOODS: Yeah, so we could bang the sign into the—private property, all right, you’ve gotta kind of keep off private property. But public property, you know, it belongs to us all, doesn’t it? So why couldn’t I put up my sign? And we would try and put them up so that it would be too annoying for them to take them down, like as high as we could get them. But we had a lot of fun.

We went to that straw poll. The Western Alabama Republican Straw Poll. That was the first time we went to any event like this, and we had no idea that when we got there, even though there were eight or nine candidates, and there were 250 people at the straw poll, 200 of them were for one candidate. They were all for Ron Paul. I had never seen anything like this before, and that really got me excited. It made me think, hey, something’s really happening here.

H. WOODS: Yeah, that was a lot of fun. You meet a lot of good people. A lot of normal people, which was—

T. WOODS: You must be thinking about some other group. I don’t know.

H. WOODS: —Well, you know, in other words, they were just hard-working people who cared about things rather than polished suits, and you know, super bright, white teeth, just trying to get up, ahead in life.

T. WOODS: So we had some fun doing that. So there you go. So, my wife is sort of on board with a lot of this stuff. I don’t grill or interrogate her about specific things, but we talk an awful lot about an awful lot of things. But this turkey recipe just blew me away, and now, just today, I learn how original it was. Like you thought, well, if it overdoes it on chicken, then it’ll be just right with turkey. So, check out TomWoods.com/turkey. That’ll take you over to my wife’s recipe, which is full of pictures, and it looks absolutely delicious. Anyway, I feel funny saying to my wife, “Thanks so much for taking some time with me today, Heather Woods.” But, thank you, dear, for talking with us today.

H. WOODS: Well, thanks for having me.

[TW note: The audio version of this episode contains a funny bloopers section that doesn’t make sense in a transcript, but is funny to listen to.]