

Sunday Dinner

Sunday dinner for us is like having Thanksgiving every week. When I say "us", I'm talking about my family, which consists of seven people, then my six cousins, three uncles, three aunts, Grandma Sybil, and Grandpa El, who all gather for Sunday dinner right after church. However, for my friends and probably a lot of other people today, Sunday dinner has become nothing more than a trip to Bill's Hotdogs, McDonald's, Subway, or maybe even Golden Corral. I fear that the concept of Sunday dinner has become a lost art. I believe Sunday dinner should be a time where you come together to eat a home-cooked meal, in the comfort of home, being able to mingle, talk, and lounge around as long as you want.

Church for my family gets out at 11:00. Well..., it is supposed to get out at 11:00, but my pastor tends to be long winded, so it usually ends at 11:20. My mom says he's not long winded, but spirit filled and we need to hear it.

Since my family is large, we usually drive two cars to church. When worship service is over, my brothers and I would leave in my dad's truck. Mom ,Dad, and my two sisters would leave in the van after a bit of socializing.

After church we would come home to change our clothes, before heading down to Grandma's. Mom would come to everybody's room to make sure that we were hanging up our clothes and to see if there was any dirt on them.

"If there is just one speck of dirt on your clothes, you are going to scrub them at the

sink!" she would say.

She didn't wash our Sunday clothes every week and we knew better than to run outside after church and get them dirty. I would change into something like blue jeans and a T-shirt. No shoes for me, I preferred to go barefooted in the warmer months. Next, I would grab my belt, wallet, pocketknife and head out the door to grandma's.

Grandma's house is only about 300 yards from my house. A bean field is the only thing that separates us. If I didn't want to take the bean field, I could always take my bike down the gravel road and enjoy the crisp, dry air, canopied by a crystal blue sky.

Every time, it would be the same as I would arrive in Grandma's yard. I could smell the distinct aroma of fried chicken that can be so easily recognized. My mouth would start to water, but I knew that was part of the torture every week. We all had to wait until the biscuits were ready before Grandma would call us in.

Under the carport, El would be sitting in his chair, Uncle Steve would be leaning against the stack of firewood, and dad would be swinging in the swing with his legs crossed and both his arms stretched out holding on to the chains that held the swing.

As I parked my bike, Steve would say to me, "Chad, when deer season comes 'round, get in da corner of that field over yonder and you'll git yourself a deer."

"Yeah, I saw seven or eight of 'em out there yesterday ev'ning", I would reply.

Then I would sit down and listen to them talk about the weather, building

houses, what they have growing in there gardens, and the latest happenings in the news. Around 12:30, Grandma, mom, or one of my aunts would come out on the stoop and ring the dinner bell which is nailed to the side of the house right above El's chair.

"Well" ..., my dad would say, ... "let's go get it."

We all get up and single file up the stairs to the house. The inside of the house is hot and sticky from all that good cooking. Fried chicken is being put on the table, biscuits are coming out of the oven, ice is being put in the glasses and one of my brothers is getting a spanking in the half bath as I come through the utility room. There is a big table in the dinning room where the adults eat that will seat twelve people. A little card table is set up for me, my brothers, and cousins. The rest go in the den and eat at the coffee table.

When everybody has gathered around, we ask the blessing and we fix our plates. The food you get at grandma's is not instant. All of it is homemade and delicious. It is so good, even when you get full, you just want to eat some more just to taste it again.

When everyone's done we all just sit around and talk about whatever, while someone grabs one more chicken leg. We talk about cousin Barrett and his new job and someone else grabs that last buttered biscuit. We talk about the new town cop and another scoop of candied yams is tasted. The latest topic of discussion was about Uncle Steve shooting a dog that kept eating his chickens and finally, someone spooned out the last bit of creamy mashed potatoes. Once the food was gone, the ladies started cleaning up and the guys found a place to plop to try to let things settle. Some of us young fellows would

muster up enough energy to play a game of backyard football.

My friends love to play football and sometimes they would invite me to town to spend the weekend. On Sunday morning, I would go to their church and afterwards we would go to Bill's Hotdogs, Subway, McDonald's or even Golden Corral. I do love to eat at these places. However, NO restaurant can take the place of Sunday Dinner.