



CELEBRATIONS AT THE COUNTRY HOUSE

Carolyn Westbrook



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*Celebrations*  
AT THE  
COUNTRY HOUSE



PHOTOGRAPHS BY APRIL PIZANA

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# AUTUMN DINNER AL FRESCO



Most people think of dining al fresco in the summertime, but in Texas and other Southern states it can be blazing hot until mid-October. So we love to celebrate the first cool breezes of fall. Our autumn celebrations come alive with rich fall plaid table runners and an urn spilling forth limbs gathered from the crepe myrtles and sunflowers picked from the fields. Pumpkins gathered from the patch are a colorful table detail.

This is how easy a gathering can be put together: take the kitchen table out into the yard and place the outdoor chairs around it. What a grand change of scenery! This is a perfect occasion to serve individual chicken pot pies in cast iron skillets.

*In short order, the family is enjoying a celebration as easy as dining al fresco on a fall night.*





# SOUTHERN BRUNCH

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I used to be intimidated to barbecue on my own. Joe was always the guy on the grill, but there are times when he is working late and I want to make some ribs, so I figured out how to make some delicious barbeque right in the oven. I think the pictures are a testimony to just how juicy and good those baby back ribs really are. And how about that cherry pie?

There is a spot by the barn under a tree where there is always a breeze, even in the July heat; it is a pretty spot to have a barbeque. Every year, I break out the decorations—and let me just tell you, I have decorations for any and all occasions, because I do love a party. I am all about vintage, so all of my flags and banners are old. I bought a giant flag at a flea market years ago and it serves us well every Fourth. The pole flag that stands on the edge of the barn is from an old elementary school in Nebraska. It was sold in a sale and then ended up down here in another Texas flea market, where I picked it up. There were actually two of them, but one year the kids decorated a float with the vintage flagpoles and as they passed under the trees, one of the flagpoles snapped, so now we have one. They won first prize on the float that year, so that was a good thing.

A small-town Fourth is the place to be, with chilled watermelon begging you to take a bite and let the juice drip down your chin; or watching the fireworks that come from all directions down this long gravel road. Out in the middle of nowhere can be a pretty great place to be. As we are stuffed to the brim with our Fourth of July food, we all sit back in our chairs or sprawl on a blanket across the grass, watching the kids run across the field with sparklers while fireworks dance across the sky.

*Happy summer!*









# Stuffed Turkey Breast

*This is an amazing alternative to cooking an entire turkey, and when plated it looks very elegant. It is the best part of the turkey, in my opinion, with no bones to deal with. This recipe always makes up extra spinach filling that I just bake in a separate pan and serve as a side. In fact, there is enough filling to stuff two turkey breasts and still have extra. For our family, one boneless turkey breast is not enough for the holidays, as we have about fifteen people. It smells just wonderful!*

**1 (12-ounce) package  
bacon**  
**1 cup chopped onion**  
**2 eggs**  
**1 cup ricotta cheese**  
**1/2 cup (1 stick) butter,  
melted, divided**  
**1 (28-ounce) bag  
chopped spinach, cooked  
in microwave and  
drained**  
**3/4 teaspoon garlic  
powder**  
**3/4 teaspoon dried  
oregano**  
**1/2 teaspoon black  
pepper**  
**2 (48-ounce) boneless  
turkey breasts**

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cover a baking sheet with foil.

Fry the bacon then drain and chop. Cook the onions in 2 tablespoons bacon drippings until soft. Remove from pan.

In a bowl combine eggs, ricotta cheese, and 1/4 cup of the melted butter; mix together. Stir in the cooked spinach, bacon, onion, garlic powder, oregano, and pepper; mix thoroughly.

Cut the turkey breast in half lengthwise, so that there is a top and a bottom. Lay both halves flat on the baking sheet, cut side up. Spread a thick layer of spinach filling onto each half. Carefully place the top of the turkey breast onto the bottom turkey breast and use skewers to keep the two halves together with the filling inside. It is okay if a little of the mixture is spilling out. Pour remaining 1/4 cup butter over the top.

Repeat same steps for the second turkey breast. Bake for 40 minutes at 425 degrees. Lower heat to 350 degrees and bake 50 more minutes, until done.

