

Recently eastern North Carolina's National Public Radio station has been sponsoring a segment entitled "This I Believe." They regularly air a thoughtful essay written and read by one of NPR's listeners.

One of the essays chosen was written by our own Gary Mitchell, lead singer for the "Molasses Creek" band. It is called "I Believe in Pot-lucks" and I reproduce it here with Gary's permission:

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"You might call them 'covered dish suppers', but we do them so often we have to use the most abbreviated term possible. A friend will say 'pot-luck at Julie's Friday' and about 30 of us will show up around 6 o'clock with a dish in hand and a smile on our face. We kinda know what everybody's gonna bring; Miss Kitty's special lima beans, Sundae's pineapple and cheese casserole (Sundae is a woman's name, not the day of the week, although she did say she was conceived on a Sunday in a Dairy Queen parking lot). Linda and Julie will bake something terrific; if Donald's in town he'll have some kind of delicious thing he's cooked in a dutch oven over coals out in the back yard. Merle is the 'Julia Child' of the crowd. We don't know WHAT we're eating from her, just that it looks, smells and tastes great. Anne will have a tasty and healthy vegetable dish; David's got a wonderful fruit pie (with a homemade crust), and the young folks not quite up to speed yet will bring drinks, chips, salsa and napkins. (Did I mention Karen's green bean casserole, Marcy's sausage rolls, or Phillip's deviled eggs?).

There are always some surprises too; people to meet, like the new doctor or school teacher, or somebody's out of town relatives here for a visit. Usually pot lucks just kinda happen, but sometimes there are special events like the 'January Birthdays pot-luck' or the 'some-sort of solstice' pot-luck. (I can't keep those solstices straight).

My own family's most special dinner of the year is our Thanksgiving pot-luck. We've been doing it since 'before you was born' as they say around here, and it absolutely forces us to clean our house (a little) at least once a year, whether it needs it or not (I'm not sure our guests fully realize that we've cleaned our house). We always try to have oysters on the grill at Thanksgiving, but this year we had a blow, and neither Stevie nor Roger Lee could get out to Hog Shoal in their boats. It was nearly a disaster, but Chuck and Liz saved the day and found a bushel over at Rose Bay.

Anyhow, we discovered early on that folks really just like to be together, and food gives them a good excuse. The food doesn't have to be anything special, except that it comes from

the hands and heart of somebody you know and love, and somehow it just tastes twice as good 'cause of that. ...And then, of course, there's the conversation: 'When is the Pony Island Restaurant closing for the winter?'; 'Tell us about Capt. Rob or Al's latest sailing adventure': maybe we'll hear a tale of Uncle Homer or Grandpa Lawton...'Its all good'. You know, you CAN develop a technique for laughing with a mouthful of mashed potatoes and gravy; it just takes practice and real commitment. I believe I'll take a 'pot-luck dinner' over a 5 star restaurant anytime (especially if I'm paying)."