Hi, this is Michael, your Cultural Alaskan Chef

Fall and Thanksgiving is one of my favorite times of the year. I'd like to share two stories with you about my time at the village of Stebbins and Little Diomede. One village on Norton Sound and another on the Bering/ Chukchi Sea.

I had spent that first fall in Stebbins tutoring students at the middle/high school and had suffered my first flu sickness the last part of October. I suffered for about ten days until my fever broke and I was finally able to function as a tutor again.

I was still feeling a little puny when I received a knock on my door at teacher housing. I opened the door and found a young middle school student. He was the son of our cultural teacher and he was holding a recently harvested duck from the tundra. He was so excited to present this bird to me and I smiled as I received it. As I pondered how to prepare it I remembered that the school would be preparing a Thanksgiving dinner for the teachers and staff. However, Thanksgiving was still over a week away. I decided to prepare Duck al l'orange. The logistics of preparing such a meal were daunting. I could get frozen orange juice, but fruit and many of the spices necessary were just unavailable. The true way of preparation involves brining the bird over night in salt in the fridge. I

decided to make a short cut version of this French recipe. I will share the ingredients and printed directions at the end of these two tales.

I did find enough salt to brine the bird, but only for a few hours. I decided to work on a sauce that was tangy instead of sugary sweet. I used a combination of white vinegar and orange juice with some simple spices like salt, pepper and garlic.

I patted the bird dry inside and out making sure the bird had been properly de-feathered and organs removed. There was a liver, heart and gizzard as I recall. I used these and boiled them in some water to combine with cornstarch to make a gravy for the mash potatoes. The sauce I made would be slathered on near the end of cooking the bird.

I began by rubbing salt over the front and back of the duck and then pouring some inside the cavity of the duck. I let it brine this way for about 3 hours in the fridge. I then took the bird and rinsed it in the sink until the salt had dissolved and had run down the drain I roasted the duck for half an hour at 425 degrees. I removed the bird and flipped it over exposing the breast. I allowed it to cool for about 15 minutes and then took my sharpest knife and began cutting the breast of the duck in curved cuts making sure I did not puncture the meat under the skin. I made sure the duck was cut from the bottom of the breast to the top of the breast on both sides. I took the sauce I'd prepared and slathered it over the breast

and back of the duck. I reduced the heat of the oven to 300 degrees and continued roasting until the bird reached 160 degrees. I added more sauce as needed until the duck was golden brown. I served this duck with the gravy I prepared and mashed potatoes with creamed peas. The preparation took quite a while and I've since gone to preparing duck or other fowl using different recipes from cooks.com or Americas Test Kitchen.

I will say that the duck was delicious although it was prepared differently than I had in the past using the more traditional recipe when I lived in southern California. The creamed peas recipe I got from cooks.com and used milk instead of cream. I have often visited this web site over the many years in the bush and use it often even today.

Thanksgiving number two occurred around the fall of 2014. Little Diomede is a remote village with a population of around 60 to 80 residents most of the time. It is a tight little community that comes together for emergencies as they happen and community events. Thanksgiving is one of those events. I remember vividly the organizing and production of our Thanksgiving meal. One thing I've not mentioned before is that Little Diomede is built on the side of a rocky island that has metal stairs and walkways. Polar Bears have been know to wander around the school and these walkways. Moreover, during certain times of the year, some of the

villagers were on polar bear patrol making sure everyone made it to the school safely. This particular event was no exception and everyone did make it safely. The school staff along with the villagers all came together and assigned jobs cooking the turkey, making stuffing, gravy, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, pies and lots of snacks. Our meal was served in the gymnasium that used to be a cafeteria prior to the remodel that happened before Pam and I got to Little Diomede.

Our school cook Vera did a great job along with some of the ladies that volunteered their time to help out. I volunteered to make some of the instant mash potatoes and gravy that would be needed. It became a massive Holliday meal and there were so many leftovers that people had plenty to take home as well. It was a wonderful meal! Some of the leftovers became turkey sandwiches that were enhanced by one ladies recipe for homemade mayonnaise. Little Diomede is a magical island and I'd like to invite you to find a book "Drums of Diomede, author by Eide". This book refers to the drums of Diomede and is related to the Inupiat drums made from walrus stomachs.

Bye the way, as I finished writing this episode my wife Pam came across an article from USA Today from 2016 written by Trevor Hughes that included a picture of me helping one of my Diomede students de-bug his clothing along with many other students. Bedbugs were a great nuisance

in the villages where Pam and I taught and finally along the way technology helped us get control of this nuisance. Would I teach in the bush again! You betcha! I loved every minute and all the adventures Pam and I shared together.

Recipe

1 (4 to 5 lb.) whole duck

salt, pepper, and garlic powder

Preheat oven to 425°F. Wash duck in cold water and remove excess fat. Dry the bird inside and out Season the inside cavity and the outside of duck with salt, pepper and garlic powder.

Allow the bird to rest in the refrigerator for about 3 hours minimum. Remove duck and place breast side down on shallow baking sheet. Bake in 425 degree oven for 30 minutes.

Remove bird from oven and allow to cool for about 15 minutes, then take razor sharp knife and make shallow slits along the breast of both sides of the duck. Return to 300 degree over for 45 minutes. Open the oven and slather bird with sauce and return to oven for 30 minutes.

Check temperature for 160 degrees near thighs and slather with another coat of sauce. Allow to cool for 15 minutes, then slice and serve with mashed potatoes and gravy.

Add a vegetable of your choosing

Sauce

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup White vinegar
1/4 cup frozen orange concentrate
1/4 cup water
salt and pepper, and add garlic powder to taste

In a heavy saucepan, combine sugar and vinegar. Cook the mixture over a medium flame until sugar melts and begins to caramelize.

Add the the orange concentrate, and liquid ingredients Add spices and cook for five minutes, stirring occasionally.