

021208 Riots for Turkey

Last year, Micah, Leslie and I hosted a big Thanksgiving dinner for several of our friends here at DTU. I had wanted to repeat the dinner again this year, but lacked a place to have such a large dinner. Fortunately, I was given permission by the acoustics department to use the kitchen in our academic building which worked out perfectly. The kitchen is a cozy room with an oven, refrigerator, sink and a large table where we could all sit comfortably. This year, I cohosted the Thanksgiving dinner with Isabelle in a strange US-French collaboration. The dinner was a great success and again guests from all over the world were in attendance. Guests included friends from the US, Canada, France, Italy, Thailand, Czech Republic, Argentina, Israel and Denmark. One of my professors who was working late even joined in for dessert.

This year I was able to easily find a frozen turkey, but I was not sure if I could get a fresh bird until the day before we celebrated on Friday the 29th. Turkey is gaining popularity in Denmark, but it is still much easier to find a goose or duck than turkey. And when you can find fresh turkey, you find that it has become rather expensive in Denmark at about \$4 per pound, so the number of guests was limited this year by the cost of the bird. When the grocery store says that the bird is fresh, they mean it. I pulled the bird out of the paper in which it was wrapped as I got ready to clean it before putting it into the oven and got a bit of a surprise. The bird still had feathers on it. It was not completely covered with feathers, but rather the defeathering process had missed quite a few. I wound up having to pluck a lot of feathers out by hand. I decided to leave the feathers on the ends of the drumstick so that they looked like a bit like a freshly trimmed French poodle. Amazingly enough, all of the feathers burned off during the cooking, or at least none of the guests noticed as they eagerly devoured the feast that was laid out before us.

Everyone brought a food item from their home country which worked out very well. The guest from the US, oddly also named Jeff from Kentucky brought candied yams which amazed the Europeans. Most could not believe that such a sweet dish made with marshmallows could be a main part of the meal. Even though marshmallows can easily be found in the US, even at the Mobile Mart on Thanksgiving morning, Jeff could not find real marshmallows in Denmark. Apparently, they only make a brief appearance on some grocer's shelves during the summer months. So, Jeff improvised by using marshmallows that were similar to the Peeps candy. These are hard, flavored marshmallows that just are not the same as the real marshmallows. Unfortunately, the ones that Jeff found were strawberry flavor which did not quite go with the whole candied yams idea. But it was a good try and everyone seemed to enjoy them nonetheless once they got over the initial shock.

Desserts were plentiful and delicious. I tried to explain to everyone as we were finishing the dinner around 1 AM that it is a thanksgiving tradition to be as full as possible, but nonetheless we had leftovers. We left the building smelling delightfully of turkey, a smell which lingered over the weekend.

Bali

One of the student travel agencies in Copenhagen had advertised a package deal to the south pacific which I thought would be great for the winter holiday. I was very excited about the prospect of using a round the world ticket to see places like Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Fiji, Thailand and Bali, all for one low price. I even contacted my friends Kat in Australia, Charity in Indonesia and my friends in Thailand to see if we could meet. However, it all wound up falling through. Despite the Bali bombing in October, there are no discount tickets available to Indonesia at all and I could not afford to pay full fare. Charity explained that the problem lies with the airlines which have cut the number of flights. For example, instead of being eight flights between Jakarta and Bali every day, now there are only three. Therefore, the airlines have no problem selling all of their tickets at full price.

Furthermore, Europeans are still flocking to south east Asia. I could not get a flight in January from Bangkok to Copenhagen, leaving me the only alternative of flying to LA and then to Copenhagen. The return route over the US tripled the cost of the ticket which is why I canceled the plan. My friends at DTU from Thailand can not go home for the winter holiday because they can not afford to fly due to the full flights. The agent who I worked with explained that she has never seen so many people flying to the region. She suggested that if I want to try this trip again next winter that I plan to book no later than August.

Which all begs the question of why United filed for bankruptcy. I think that the excuse of September 11 only takes the airline so far. Granted, airlines all over the world are appear to be suffering, or are they? Budget carriers such as Iceland Air, Ryan Air and others are thriving. If you look at United's operating cost, 44% of it is salaries as opposed to 27% for Lufthansa, its Star Alliance partner. After having given the US airlines a huge amount of cash last year, I hope that the US government thinks long and hard before using our tax dollars to once again support another oversized company.

Protests

Denmark currently holds the presidency of the EU and next weekend is an important meeting of the EU in Copenhagen. The meeting is an enlargement summit to discuss the membership of the ten new countries which have been invited to join the EU. The most interesting of the new countries is Cyprus. The EU membership bid has been a huge incentive for Greece and Turkey to finally resolve the problems of the divided island. If a plan to unify Cyprus can not be reached by the time that the country enters the EU, only the Greek side of the island will gain entrance. Turkey itself was not given an invitation which has been seen as a snub. However, Germany and France recently announced their support for a bid for Turkey in the future.

The entrance into the EU will actually be difficult for many of the new countries. For example, the huge subsidies that many of the EU countries give to their farmers threaten the huge agricultural industry in Poland. The Polish farmers will simply not be able to compete with the subsidized produce from countries such as France. New hygiene laws which must be imposed for food to be distributed within the EU mean

that slaughterhouses which have traditionally done their work by hand must now fire their workers and install machines to do the work. So, entering the EU is not pain free and therefore only a few of the invited countries have agreed to the terms of membership so far.

It is expected that protestors from all over Europe and most worrisome, violent anarchists who have swarmed to the cities hosting past meetings in will be in full force during the weekend. In a system which allows for the free expression of beliefs, I have very little patience for people who try to prove their point by breaking windows or smashing the golden arches. People from the US have been specifically warned that they might want to keep a low profile downtown during the weekend. A warning I attribute in no small way to Bush's needlessly overaggressive stance towards Iraq over the past few weeks. Plus by taking control of the original copy of the Iraqi weapons declaration, the US government has effectively diminished the integrity of the UN. So many people have approached me in the past month, saying things like, "I think that Americans are a good people overall, but how could you have elected a man like Bush." Needless to say, Bush is not very popular over here. I am intrigued by international politics, so I think that it will be exciting to be downtown during the protests to see what people have to say. I will just make myself scarce if people start throwing vienerbrød and pickled herring at the riot police.

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