

## Message From our PTA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair

Hello Fremont Families!

I am excited to share some resources with you all! I've included some information on how we can collectively expand our knowledge of Thanksgiving and share it with our children. You'll also get to learn about my family traditions along with those of our PTA President, Andrea Wader and Communications Director, Audra Haskell!

**Gratitude and honor:** For the last few years, I have enjoyed sharing some indigenous perspectives of Thanksgiving with Sarina and also reading a book with her called [Giving Thanks](#). It's a beautiful way to begin the day with gratitude for nature and our families.

**Education:** Sharing indigenous perspectives of Thanksgiving is a great way to enhance an informed perspective of how we may want to continue with our celebrations. Where I am from in Massachusetts, Native people have celebrated Thanksgiving as a Day of Mourning since 1976. I don't believe this information requires families to change their own individual traditions, but rather, that it is informative and important for us to always hear directly from the voices of those we do not typically hear from and share those perspectives with our children. Learn more about [The Day of Mourning](#). For anyone wanting educational resources specifically created for children on the story of Thanksgiving, please check out K-3 educator, Naomi O'Brien's [materials](#).

In addition, regardless of the day or month, I always begin my engagements with a Land Acknowledgement to honor the space and land we are in. If interested, please feel free to use this verbiage and print it out for your homes and offices: ***This land that we inhabit is physically situated in the original Ancestral homelands of the Tongva and Chumash people. We pay respect to the Tongva, Chumash, and all Indigenous people - past, present and future - and their continuing presence in the homeland and throughout their historical diaspora.***

Kind regards,  
Dr. Nooshin Valizadeh

## **Family Traditions**

**Nooshin Valizadeh:** Something we have been doing as a family for the last few years is sharing our daily highs, lows and what we are thankful for at dinner. We try to do it everyday, and while we don't always eat dinner all at the same time, we do make an effort to at least do it while one of us is eating. This exercise has helped us get our relatively quiet girl to talk and also educate her on our adult lives as well. I have heard from other families with more vocal children that it has taught them to share space and centralize each other equally.

My family and many Persian families I know celebrate Thanksgiving by incorporating Persian food that fits perfectly for fall. My favorites are [Fesenjan](#) - a pomegranate and walnut stew with chicken over white rice, and [Zereshk Polo](#) - a saffron rice with barberries that goes perfectly with chicken or turkey and is full of antioxidants. I have learned through my own students that they too incorporate their culture's food into the feast. I would love to hear about ways your family celebrates! Please email me photos and if you can, a description and recipe: [nooshinv3@gmail.com](mailto:nooshinv3@gmail.com) We would be happy to add them to the newsletter after the holiday break!

**Andrea Wader:** Thanksgiving is a really special time for my family and were always formal. Both of my parents were gourmet cooks and enjoyed the process of cooking this meal. I watched them for years and can practically do it blindfolded now! Our menu is typical Thanksgiving fare, with a little bit of my dad's German roots in the stuffing. We roast a 12-15lb turkey, stuffed with a combination of ground beef, bread, onions, celery and sage; mashed potatoes with pan gravy; haricot verts, mushroom and shallot casserole; sautéed yams with butter & brown sugar; cranberry, apple & orange relish (Karli uses my mom's hand grinder to make this on her own...so fun for the kids to do). We cheat on dessert since none of us are bakers so in the last couple years, we either order the Banana Pudding w/ Pumpkin Gingersnaps from Magnolia Bakery or the Pumpkin Chiffon Pie with Spiced Whipped Cream from Willamette Valley Pie Co. Most of my family is no longer with us so it's just the three of us. We dress up, set the table with my mom's China, silver, and crystal then sit down to a gluttonous meal.

During the month of November, we write what we're thankful for on paper leaves and tuck them into the branches of our Thankful Tree (some may call it a Gratitude Tree). During our meal, we read some of the leaves out loud. Since we moved to Long Beach, we try to eat early enough so we can walk down to view the Trees on the Bay light up around 5:00pm. It's also fun to see the trees light up in the lagoon the next day. In years past, we've headed out to the desert and

prepared our traditional meal wherever we stay. We head over to view the tree lighting at La Quinta Resort & Club the next day. My family has been going there for 40 years and it's a home away from home for us, especially with both of my parents now gone. We feel closer to them when we're there.

The best part of our Thanksgiving meal, and I'm convinced it's why we cook for nearly nine hours straight, is to get to the leftovers! This is going to sound super gross but we always get Wonder Bread (I know, ewww) but it's really soft and gummy and makes for the best open face, hot turkey sandwich drizzled with the most amazing rich pan gravy. It also makes excellent turkey sandwiches with shredded lettuce and mayo. We throw all turkey bones etc. into a crockpot and make a 36-48 hour bone broth. Nothing goes to waste!



Caption

**Audra Haskell:** My childhood Thanksgivings were large affairs, celebrated with my parents and brother, our grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and family friends. We frequently hosted and would wake up early to begin the preparations for both decor and the feast. What I looked forward to most, however, was KTLA's marathon of "The Twilight Zone" which began airing in 1980 and quickly became a SoCal tradition. I'd wake up and watch a few episodes before my parents ordered me to get ready or help. I'd brush my teeth, and sneak off to watch an episode. I'd fold some napkins, and sneak off to watch an episode. [Insert minimal amount of effort here], and sneak off to watch an episode. Once the guests were gathered, I'd greet and hug, and sneak off to watch an episode. I thoroughly enjoyed every feast and its accompanying boisterous and colorful conversation. My family was a hoot, a loud and extroverted hoot joyful arguing and roasting and laughter. I'd enjoy myself to bursting and at the first opportunity for escape I'd sneak off to watch as many episodes as possible before it was time for pie.

Our family is much, much smaller now, and our new traditions are very different from what my fiancé and I grew up with, but one thing remains the same: I still wake up every year and stream "The Twilight Zone" in remembrance of those KTLA marathons that made this introvert's Thanksgiving holiday more bearable.