

# Seven Ideas for a Grateful Holiday Dinner

Focused on the one throwing the Party!

*Reclaiming The Holidays i.e. The Holy Days – Thoughts From Shiloh Sophia*

Our home is a sacred place that we blessed to share with others. Setting the energy of the home, and the day, and your mood will do “thankful wonders” to the environment, and the experience folks have when they share this day with you.

Here are some simple ideas, which may seem challenging at first because we think folks wont want to do them. Well not everyone will, but some will, and that will be enough. And it is a part of making this day your own. Hopefully one of these ideas will inspire you – or inspire you to make up your own ritual for today.

## 1. Prayer Bowl:

Enroll one of the younger guests to pass around pens and paper and a prayer bowl and ask folks to write down what that they are grateful for. Later in the evening – burn the prayers together, and either read one another’s or do it quietly.

*By having one of the younger generation do it, they feel really important and good to participate and make adults do this, and also adults are less likely to say no to a younger person asking such a sweet thing of them.*

## 2. Gratitude Circle:

Call a circle right before dinner to give thanks. Then let your guests know that at the dinner table you will be having a gratitude conversation, and each person will have a chance to share what they are grateful or thankful for in their lives.

*You WILL most likely experience resistance at first, but they will get over it, and instead of talking of football, the kids’ schools and which mattress to buy this year – the table will be filled with love.*

## 3. All My Relations Altar:

Set up an altar in a central place and put up photos of living family and well as family gone before. If you don’t have a photo you can write a list. And most especially write a list of who is coming, with the words, I Am Thankful For: Put out pens and paper and invite folks to participate. Whether they do or don’t they will see it and the spirit of blessing is there in physical form.

*If it is not too late for you – you can also send a quick e-mail inviting folks to bring photos or momentos for the altar – or call it a family table if the word altar freaks them out.*

## 4. Four Directions Sacred Environment

Create your environment with a sense of sacred space. Put candles everywhere, even if it is the daytime. Right by the candles float little tiny flowers from the yard or from a store bouquet on bowls of water or in little vases. Then put a feather, or something representing air if you want to. No one else needs to know that this is – but they will see it and it will bless them. This can also in it’s own way, bring awareness to this holiday which for many has a mixed meaning.

*Do this if you can right before guests arrive and say a blessing around your home and a prayer to make yourself a wonderful host.*

## 5. Gratitude Creative Space

Set up a table for creative expression. Get out pens, paper, glitter glue, crayons, scissors, hole punch, yarm and construction paper. Make time to start your own before guests arrive – if possible find a wall to hang up the art made that day and make a sign: Gratitude GALLERY and the date, or your family name or something to make it special. Folks will naturally go on over, kids will be happy and it will create a playful thankful experience in your home.

*If you don’t have a basket or drawer yet for theses supplies – now is the time. Do not go a week longer without having simple art supplies at your fingertips! Some families have written me that they also photocopy out of my journals and put those out for kids and adults to color!*

## **6. Chocolate' or Like Water For Chocolate - Contemplative Cookie**

Sit down prior to cooking and write out your menu, then choose a theme or love topic for each menu item. Then when you are cooking it, say that prayer or a sentence regarding that essence which you are imparting to the food. Keep a notebook while you are cooking so you can come up with alternate new name and descriptions for the food. Then when you present the food you can tell the story of cooking it. Don't forget to add chocolate to the gravy – just a little. And roses to some dish as well.

*If you have not watched either of the two movies listed above – for a while – do that soon, and they are also good late night movies after dinner and guests are settling down or leaving.*

## **7. Giving Thanks to God, Our Creator and to your family.**

If you have a chance, prior to guests arriving or even the day before, get out your journal or computer and write a prayer of thanksgiving. Make a list of 30 things you are grateful for.

During dinner, and afterward, make a point to not be too busy “doing” to not take time to tell each guest how important they are to you – and why and in what way.

During dinner and afterward, don't be shy to tell folks about why you are thankful to Creator/Life/Universe – share with them, without preaching. In the spirit of giving thanks, they may also be inspired to consider who and what they are thankful for.

You can also set up an alter dedicated to your spiritual path with candles and flower and books to share – depending on where you are with that in terms of feeling comfortable. If you are a person with a spiritual path, don't feel like you need to shut it down to be appropriate to your guests – BE THAT PATH and that spirit yourself, and your home can and will reflect your faith and the space you create of love will be felt by the faithful and the dissident. Also if you have photo albums of your life – putting them out shares your life in a gentle way that is endlessly fascinating to others.

### ***Blessings to you this Holy Day of Thankfulness, Gratitude, Celebration and Possibility!***

*Perhaps most important of all for a truly grateful dinner is CHOOSING WHO YOU ARE GOING TO BE as a HOST - HOW and WHO you want to show up as. Consider your guests arriving, how will you greet them? Consider the folks you usually have tension with, how will you, from the start create that as something different this year?*

*How can you radiate peace, and not do too much? How will you ask for help and not show that you are stressed? How do you want to be perceived? Often we feel framed in advance by friends and family – as if they already have us figured out. Who cares? You can continue to transform and be who you want to be. A great trick is to choose powerfully, non-reactivity all day long.*

### ***Final bit of counsel:***

*Don't clean up right after dinner. Clear the plates. Get a big glass of red wine or sparkling juice and sit back and enjoy the fullness of your meal and your guests.*

*Be grateful. There is SO MUCH to be thankful for. Even amidst the challenges, there is so so so much. By most standards in the world, we are rich beyond belief.*

*So let us celebrate and truly honor what we have while being mindful of others in our lives and on our planet.*

*Most of all, commit to your own personal joy, that is the surest way for all to feel the most gratitude!*

***May love be at the center of all choices.***

This was modified from A Truly Thankful Thanksgiving. As usual, forgive me the typos of imperfection.

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