

Editorial

The Christmas Procedure: A Surgical Approach to Holiday Cooking

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Surgeons are known for their steady hands, decision-making skills, and, according to some, their self-admiration. Nevertheless, even the most skilled surgeon can fall victim to the chaos of the holiday season, particularly when it comes to the age-old tradition of Christmas dinner.

As Christmastide comes into sight, the surgeon's skills seem to be of considerable use at the dinner table. Gone are the scalpels and the smell of electrocauterized vessels, replaced by spatulas and the comforting aroma of the turkey cooking in the oven. Many surgeons can put their surgical personality to use [1], to be precise, if the ringing of the pager does not salt the Christmas game.

The gastronomical journey starts with the assembly of the Christmas menu [2]. Whether figuring out the best way to carve the turkey or mastering the art of the perfect roast potato, surgeons approach each task with an open-minded willingness to learn and adapt. Although this part of the operation seems like a piece of cake, it is only through thorough preparation, and the meticulous scheduling of the operating theatre management [3], that the surgeon finds his or her way through (Figure 1).

The next step is shopping for all the ingredients, which can be a daunting task. The hordes of holiday shoppers clogging up the aisles of grocery stores should not be an issue for the surgeon. Luckily, the anaesthesiologist ensures a serene and calm atmosphere [4], allowing lists to be made, needs prioritised, and an accurate shopping route devised to reach the cash registers. Next, interacting with the cashier can be approached with the surgeon's extraverted mindset. By using a sultry but convincing voice and assertive demeanour, the groceries pass the storefront and reach the top-down convertible with surgical precision.

When it comes to cooking the Christmas dinner, conscientiousness and devotion are critical. As a second nature, despite the change in operating environment, the surgical team knows that optimal preparation is crucial. As the hours tick by and the kitchen table becomes increasingly cluttered with dirty dishes and partially chopped vegetables, the emotional stability of the surgeon is challenged. No matter how well-planned and executed, unexpected challenges always arise. Although the roast may turn out dry, the gravy may be too thick, or the pie crust may burn, it is certain that the scrub nurse does not provide the tools that are asked for, but those that are needed the most [5]. The circulating nurse manages to keep everything from falling on the floor or miraculously disappearing, while the cleaning crew ensures sterility. Like in the operating theatre, the surgeon is lucky to work within a team during this Christmas cooking [6], exchanging the nurses and anaesthesiologists for family and friends. The Christmas-induced spirit of cooperation leads to the whole process running smoothly and efficiently. As the oven timer beeps, the surgical team has made it through the procedure.



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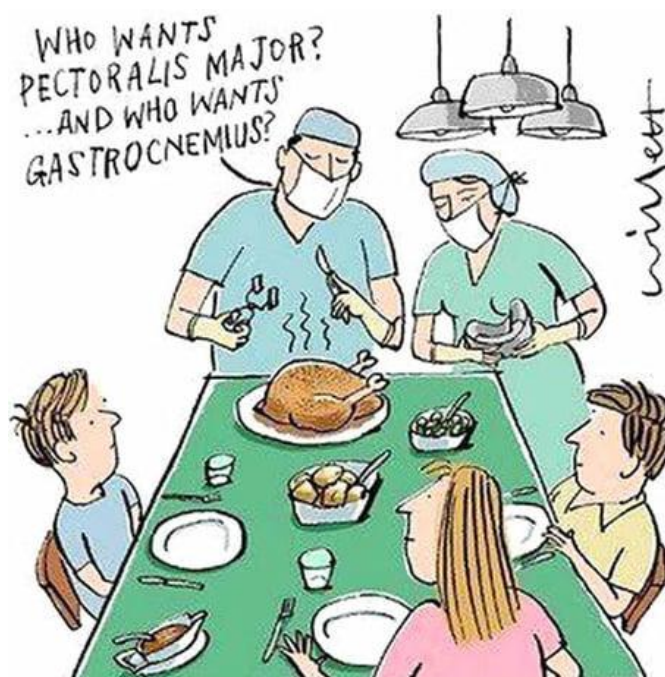


Figure 1. When the procedure is successfully completed, it is time for the surgical team to carve the turkey and celebrate Christmas together. Image reproduced with permission from Malcolm Willett.

Eventually, it is time for the serving of the banquet, which is accompanied by a steady hand and good company (Figure 1). There is nothing like sitting down to a beautifully laid out table, surrounded by loved ones, and enjoying the fruits of labour and having a good conversation. In this context, as with any stereotype, the image of the surgical personality is not generalisable. Not all surgeons are able to make a perfect Christmas dinner, nor do they have the time to do so [7]. Although the personality of all physicians can be placed within a bell-shaped curve, it is important to be aware and reflect on the interplay of character traits, milieu, and teamwork.

Altogether, to those enjoying Christmas dinner, remember to have a little mercy on your surgical spouse as they navigate this foreign (but delicious) territory. Happy holidays!

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