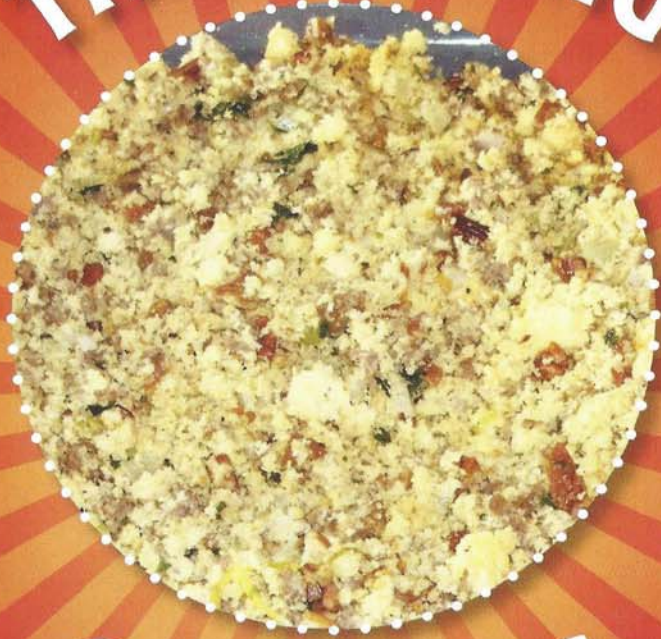
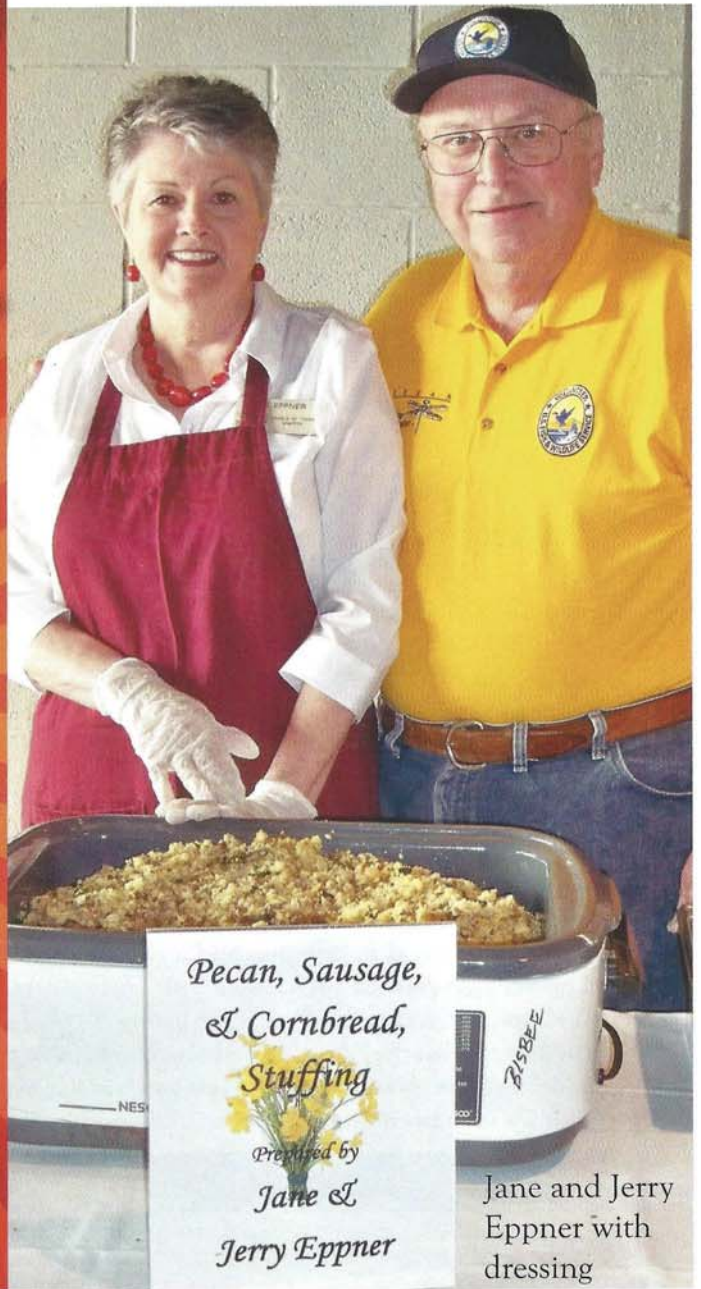


# THE BLESSING



# OF DRESSING

Story and photos by Janice R. Edwards



Pulled pork dressing and salad



Spring in Brazoria County welcomes migrating birds who rest and feed in our Columbia Bottomlands and wildlife refuges. For 20 years, a celebration of that event is held in southern Brazoria County, the Migration Celebration, organized by the Friends of the Brazoria Wildlife Refuges in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

The name, Migration Celebration, and the time of year (mid-April) in which the event is held came from the fact that this is the peak of the song bird migration through the county. Migration Celebration tours, presentations and other activities are mostly free to the public. However, since 2003, a dinner was added as a fundraiser for the event.

Each year, the dinner (prepared by volunteers and Friends of the Brazoria Wildlife Refuges) has grown larger until, for the past few years, it is held in River Place in Freeport. For the last few years I have attended the dinner, it has always consisted of a salad, pulled pork, beans, a dessert and "the dressing." I'd pass on the dessert for another scoop of the dressing which is made with cornbread, sausage, celery, onions and pecans - and, I'm not the only one. While waiting in line for the meal, you often hear requests for "just a little more stuffing, please."

For the past six or seven years, Jerry and Jane Eppner have lovingly recreated this heavenly creation from scratch. In 2014, they were asked to increase their recipe to serve 240 people because last year they almost ran out of their dressing. How did Jerry and Jane come up with this outstanding dressing? They started out wanting to make something a little different for their family for Thanksgiving, and they found a Corn Bread, Pecan and Oyster Stuffing recipe on page 52 of the December 1982 Cuisine magazine. They have since deleted the oysters, and added enough changes to make the recipe their own. They also make the recipe as a dressing (cooked and served outside a turkey), not a stuffing. One batch of the dressing recipe makes about 8 cups.


"For the Migration Celebration dinner, we make the dressing in double batches at a time because we don't have a bowl big enough to make more than that at one time," explained Jane. For the 2014 dinner, they made 10 double batches.

"We work together as a team when we make the dressing," Jerry continued. "While I am busy crumbling the corn bread, Jane is sautéing the sausage and veggies. It makes it fun to work together. We start out Wednesday making the cornbread. Thursday, we chop the vegetables, and Friday (the day of the dinner), we put it all together."

They put the batches of dressing in aluminum pans for transport to River Place where they are heated up on the pit for a hint of a smoky flavor. At home, they usually use a 350 degree oven.

I was so impressed by the wonderful dressing that I asked the Eppners if they would share their recipe with me. They were kind enough to share it with my family and me last Thanksgiving and there was not a crumb left over from the 8 cup recipe. My Mom's recipe for Corn Bread sage dressing had always been a hit my family - but this recipe trounced it. When I thanked them for the recipe, I asked if I could share it with others and they agreed, which leads us all to the Blessing of Dressing. Enjoy! ■

See recipe on page 22



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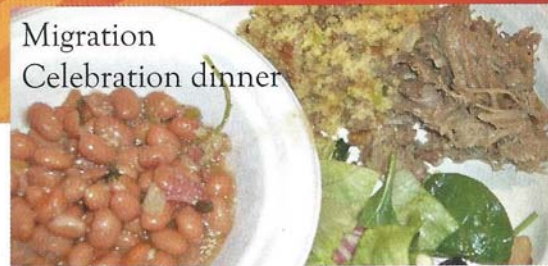
# Jerry and Jane Eppner's Migration Celebration Corn Bread and Pecan Dressing

**DRESSING** Makes about 8 cups

½ pound bulk pork sausage meat  
1 cup coarsely broken, toasted pecans  
¾ cup unsalted butter  
1 cup coarsely chopped onion  
1 cup chopped celery  
½ cup chopped fresh parsley  
Low sodium chicken stock - about a qtr of a can more or less to taste  
Salt and ground pepper to taste

1. Make corn bread.
2. Heat oven to 350°.
3. Crumble sausage into heavy skillet; sauté over medium heat, stirring with wooden spoon to break up meat, until lightly browned and cooked through – about 15 minutes; drain and discard drippings. Reserve sausage meat.
4. Spread pecans in single layer on large baking sheet. Toast in oven, shaking pan occasionally, until lightly browned – about 10 minutes. Remove from oven; reserve at room temperature.
5. Melt ½ cup of the butter in large, heavy skillet over medium heat. When foam subsides, add onion and celery; reduce heat to medium-low. Sauté vegetables, stirring frequently, until tender, about 15 minutes. Don't overcook the celery and onion. You don't want it too soft or too crunchy. Remove from heat; stir in sausage, pecans and parsley.
6. Melt remaining ¼ cup butter in small saucepan over medium heat (optional – for added richness), cool slightly. Crumble corn bread into large mixing bowl. You should have about 6 cups. Add ingredients from skillet; toss to combine. Add small amounts of chicken broth and

Migration  
Celebration dinner



the melted butter until stuffing feels slightly moist, neither too dry nor too wet. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Heat the dressing in a pan covered with foil at about 350° until warmed throughout.

## CORN BREAD

Makes one 8-inch square corn bread (8 – 10 servings as bread; 6 cups for stuffing)

1 cup yellow cornmeal	½ teaspoon salt
1 cup all-purpose flour	1 cup milk
1 tablespoon baking powder	1 egg at room temperature
1 tablespoon sugar	¼ cup unsalted butter, melted

1. Heat oven to 425°. Butter 8-inch baking pan, dust with flour, tapping out excess.
2. Sift cornmeal, 1 cup flour, baking powder, sugar and salt together into large bowl. In separate bowl, whisk together milk, egg, and melted butter. Add to cornmeal mixture all at once; stir just until dry ingredients are thoroughly moistened with milk mixture. Scrape into prepared baking pan; smooth with spatula.
3. Bake until edges are lightly browned and pull away from sides of pan – about 25 minutes. Remove from pan; cool thoroughly on rack before serving.