



## Dinner Is Served

Congresswoman **Marsha Blackburn** gives us a taste of a favorite Southern tradition: Sunday dinner with family, friends, and Chuck's tomatoes.

**A LOT OF FOLKS WAX POETIC** about why the South is better than just about any other place to live—traditions, family, great weather, fertile soil. Now, all of that is true and I'm not knocking any of it, but if you want to know the real secret to why so many love the South, it's the food. Plain and simple. Southerners don't eat to live; we live to eat.

I loved Sunday dinner as a child growing up. I loved the fact that family and friends all came together for one last hurrah before we headed back to the week. But more than anything, I loved my mother's roast beef. The aroma of the meat and thick gravy wafted out of my mother's cast-iron Dutch oven and would practically fill the whole neighborhood with its warm, welcoming scent. That's real comfort food.

When Chuck and I married and moved to Tennessee, I wasn't going to let the tradition of Sunday dinner become a thing of the past. I inherited that cast-iron pot and packed it for our trip to Nashville. It was now my time to learn how to have that dinner ready on the table as everyone arrived after church each Sunday.

As the family grew, Chuck and I gave the Sunday-dinner tradition our own signature twists. After church, the front door of our home swings



open as much-loved neighbors, coworkers, cousins, and children march down the well-worn path to the kitchen to greet one another with hugs, kisses, and the news of the week. The bearer of

the best news always gets a special seat of honor at the dinner table: the "king's chair." At the head of the table, the chair was the prize find during one of my antiquing treks through the Tennessee countryside. We celebrate birthdays, engagements, A's on spelling tests—whatever qualifies as the best news of the week.

When the days get warmer, a picnic table and a rocking chair on the back porch replace the dining room table and the king's chair. Stories turn from news of engagements and upcoming birthdays to Chuck's pride and glory, his tomato garden—which produces about \$20 worth of tomatoes at a cost of \$100 each year.

Sometimes I think the only real reason for eating meals is to get to dessert, and the crowd favorite is homemade ice cream, fresh from the creamer, topped with each of our favorite fixin's from the sundae bar. Nothing goes better with ice cream than a fresh-baked pie—peach when the fruit is in season at the local farmers' market, and apple in the fall.

But in the end, all that poetic waxing might be right. Food and garden tomatoes aren't the reason for the ongoing tradition. It really is about fellowship with friends and family. And now, I'd better start getting ready for next Sunday. ★

—THE NANNY'S DIARY—

## The Longest Day

If there's ever a time to launch a campaign to promote the prevention and detection of women's cancers, **Fran Drescher** says it's June 21.



**CANCER SURE HIT HOME** this year in DC, although in truth, there isn't a home in America that hasn't been affected by it. In spite of Tony Snow's and Elizabeth Edwards's own personal and private heartaches, they've shared their

experiences with the public, and that will help save lives. Fame brings attention to issues and raises awareness. I got famous, and I too got cancer—uterine—and now I live to talk about it. Sometimes the best gifts come in the ugliest packages.

I'm here in Washington a lot, working closely with Congress and other concerned groups. Together we got Johanna's Law passed, which President Bush signed on January 12; it authorizes up to \$16.5 million for gynecologic education and awareness over a three-year period. But that was just the beginning—

now the funding must be appropriated. This June 21, the longest day of sunlight in the year—and my seventh anniversary of wellness—also marks the launch of the Cancer Schmancer Movement. Our mission is to ensure that all women's cancers will be diagnosed in Stage 1, when the disease is most curable. Early detection equals survival. It's as simple as that.

Through our website, lobbying efforts, and educational outreach, the Movement will galvanize women to alert Capitol Hill that the collective female vote is more powerful than the richest corporate lobbyist. We need to educate women on how to detect early warning signs and what tests can save their lives, so they can become better medical consumers and take control of their bodies.

It's a new dawn for women's healthcare, so follow the "Fran Plan" by logging onto CancerSchmancer.org and becoming a member. Together we can sign petitions, change policy, and shift the course of women's health history. ★