



Photo by Cade Martin

The Memory of Thanksgiving Ham

Juan Williams, NPR Senior Correspondent

Most people think of roasted turkey as the heart of their Thanksgiving dinner. But not me. My taste buds flare at the memory of Thanksgiving ham. My dad would bake the large ham overnight after tenderly bathing it in brown sugar and orange juice. He then planted cloves in the middle of precisely patterned grooves, a lattice pattern, that circled the fat covering the ham. While smoking a cigarette and sipping gin and tonic, he would then baste the ham with a mixture of honey and orange juice every hour on the hour while reading the papers and playing solitaire. By dawn, the smell of the ham, combined with the perfume of the honey and the cloves, announced Thanksgiving as a comfort food sanctuary from every day life. As the day began with the televised parade, followed by the football games, the trick was to talk dad into cutting a little piece of the crusty, sugary skin off one end, supposedly to make sure the ham was properly prepared. The truth was I couldn't wait to have a taste. He knew it and let me get away with little treats all day long.