



### Dear Paula

*Some of our service men and women share the things they will miss this holiday season while in service to our country. I think you will appreciate reading a couple of their personal thoughts. If you'd like more information on sending gifts to those serving abroad, visit [anysoldier.com](http://anysoldier.com).*

### Dear Ms. Deen,

I will be in Afghanistan during Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, and I will miss one particularly unique side dish that I have always associated with these holidays—artichoke hearts casserole. The recipe all started when my mother was pregnant with me in an area that did not offer fresh artichokes. She craved artichokes steamed with seasoned breadcrumbs and grated Parmesan cheese stuffed on the inside. She improvised and made a casserole with frozen artichoke hearts that yielded the same flavors as fresh artichokes. My mother always made this dish, and when she passed away, my father carried on the tradition.

**Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Jennifer Mellone, US Navy  
Camp Eggers, Kabul, Afghanistan**



### Dear Paula Deen,

I miss Mom's and my mother-in-law's cooking. Specifically, Mom makes great stuffed cabbage, and my mother-in-law makes great lemon squares with real lemon peel.

All I need to survive out here is a decent cup of coffee. And fortunately, my relatives keep me well-stocked!

**Lieutenant Colonel Bryan F. Salas  
Fallujah, Iraq**



### Dear Ms. Deen,

I will be in Kuwait during Thanksgiving and Christmas this year, and I will miss a special dish that my stepmother, Gay Buckley, makes. This dish means a lot to me because it is something that has brought us together as a family. I came to live with my dad, step-mom, and step-sister Jenni when I was fourteen. Within a year, my

younger brother Justin joined us and shortly after my younger sister Kelly. In a year, my step-mom went from cooking for three to cooking for six. She was always trying to come up with a dish that everyone would like and that was a bit of a challenge, to say the least. Around the holidays was the roughest because she wanted to choose something that everyone would enjoy. She did it though, and after talking to her friends Bonnie and Warren, she came up with "Steak Salad." This dish has the ability to please everyone in our family and she still makes this meal around the holidays. This is one of my favorite dishes and she surprised me and made it the night I returned from my last deployment to Afghanistan.

**Staff Sgt. Kevin Buckley, U.S. Army Reserve,  
Third Army Public Affairs Office  
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait**

