Tradition becomes Carson City's golden nugget

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Forty-two years ago, Carson Nugget proprietors Hop and Howard Adams helped out a guy down on his luck by giving him a meal on Thanksgiving.

On Thursday, Carson Nugget assistant vice president Brad Adams continued the tradition started by his grandfather and great-uncle – a tradition that has grown to helping hundreds of people.

Adams oversaw operations as kitchen staff prepared 1,500 pounds of turkey, 1,000 pounds of whipped potatoes, 1,000 pounds of stuffing, 400 pounds of homemade cranberry sauce, 4,800 dinner rolls and 750 pies.

"The madhouse is just getting started," said Adams on Thanksgiving morning as the first in line began making their way inside the Garden Room Coffee Shop.

"We have a staff of 15 cooks, 11 waitresses, six busboys and four hosts. And most of them are here on their own time. They're donating their services today."

Sous Chef Sal Braccamontes has been at work all week preparing the fresh, whole turkeys for Thursday's meals.

"We started about four days ago," said Braccamontes. "So we've been at it about 96 hours to get it all ready. But we're pretty used to it by now. I've been doing it the last 12 years, and it has become pretty routine."

It may be routine by now, but it was no less busy. Waitresses and busboys whizzed past each other in the kitchen with trays full of turkey meals.

The plates were heaped with roasted turkey or sugar-cured ham, whipped potatoes, giblet gravy, fresh garden vegetables, glazed yams and homemade cranberry sauce for the grateful diners.

"I just moved here a few months ago and heard about the free meal from co-workers," said 34-year-old Vince White.

"I live alone and don't have family here so this was a great opportunity for me. It's a great community thing they're doing here. It's nice of the Nugget to do something like this.

"Can I have some more?" White chuckled, as he rubbed his full tummy.

Patrons only had to say,"I'm a guest of the Nugget today," between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. for their free meal. Adams expects to serve more than 3,500 people between the Thanksgiving and Christmas day meals.

"This is our way of saying thanks to the community," said Adams. "Everything is smoothly run in the kitchen. We plan, meet about it, and mishaps don't happen very often.

"But after granddad and great-uncle did this for the one man at Thanksgiving, they decided to do it at Christmas also, so people could have a good meal."

Pastry Chef Graig Hollis prepared 150 mince meat pies, 250 apple pies and 350 pumpkin pies. In addition, more than 500 pies that were ordered to go.

"Everything we've made here is from scratch," said Hollis.

"Even the 4,800 dinner rolls. I think we're the only scratch bakery left in town."

"My compliments to the chefs," said White as he headed to the door.

"Especially the apple pie with brandy sauce. That was awesome."