

Turkey Becoming More Popular With Shoppers

The turkey is certainly not nature's most beautiful fowl.

But the traditional Thanksgiving bird—which scientific breeding practices have made plump and often ungainly—is looking better and better to consumers.

While still far less popular than its red meat competitors at the

food counter, the turkey is making impressive production and consumption gains, and is becoming, instead of merely a holiday treat, a bird for all seasons.

No paltry poultry. According to a new cash receipts from 1972's turkey crop reached an all-time high of \$537 million, up \$36 million from a year earlier and an increase of nearly ten-fold over 1935's \$59 million.

Likewise, per capita consumption has jumped: In 1935, the average American ate 1.7 pounds of turkey per year. In 1972, we ate 8.9 pounds per person, a new record. This is still far below beef and pork, which weighed in at 116 and 67 pounds, respectively. It is also below broilers, which registered per capita consumption of 40 pounds in 1972.

But there are indications that turkey is becoming more of a year-round fare.

In 1960, 56 percent, or more than half of all the turkey we consumed, was eaten in the last quarter of the year—over the Thanksgiving-Christmas period. By 1972, this had dropped to 46 percent.

So far in 1973, the production trend is upward.

In January, producers in 20 States planned to raise 128 million turkeys this year, 4 percent more than in 1972.

Slaughter rates also are higher. In January, 4.6 million turkeys were slaughtered under Federal inspection, up from 3.8 million in January 1972. But the real boost, say ERS turkey specialists, is in the area of cut-up and further processed birds.

Processed to please. More than half of the turkey meat output in 1972 was cut up or further processed. Cut-up accounted for 17 percent of the total

turkey certified ready-to-cook in Federally inspected plants, and further processed, another 36 percent.

The further processed meat takes in turkey rolls, roasts, frozen dinners, pot pies, and ground turkey. Though pot pies and frozen dinners headed the list of processed turkey products purchased in the mid-1960's, the rolls and roasts have been gaining rapidly since then.

Turkey roasts first began to be sold commercially in the early 1960's. An immediate success, they showed a fivefold increase in volume in the short span of 4 years after their introduction. The roasts, normally consisting of raw, frozen, deboned turkey meat in 1-5 pound sizes, now account for nearly one-third of all further processed turkey products.

Turkey rolls, sold cooked with binder added in 10-pound sizes or larger, are mainly for the institutional market. Smaller turkeys are also coming on the market in increasing numbers.

This wider choice of forms in which turkey is now available is making it more competitive with red meat. One Washington, D. C., grocery chain—whose display recipes show ground turkey substituting for ground beef—reports that ground turkey is moving well. The store recently raised the price from 69 cents to 73 cents per pound, 14 cents more than the whole frozen turkeys it sells, but still 20 cents less than regular ground beef.

This is a primary reason for

turkey's increased attractiveness.

As cost-conscious consumers react to high meat prices by searching for more economical sources of protein, the holiday turkey—in one of its everyday forms—is appearing as a versatile, cost-saving alternative.

Protein packed. Nutritionally speaking, shoppers could hardly make a better choice. Ready-to-cook turkey is 24 percent protein, compared to 19.5 percent for beef.

The fat content of turkey is generally lower than beef, and the fat is also less saturated. Three ounces of light roast turkey meat contain 150 calories, against 165 in the same amount of

lean chuck roast. Dark turkey meat is somewhat higher in calories than light (175 calories in 3 ounces), but still contains less calories than most beef cuts.

The Old Timer



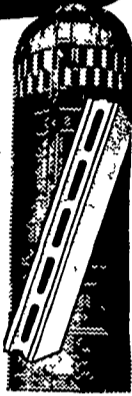
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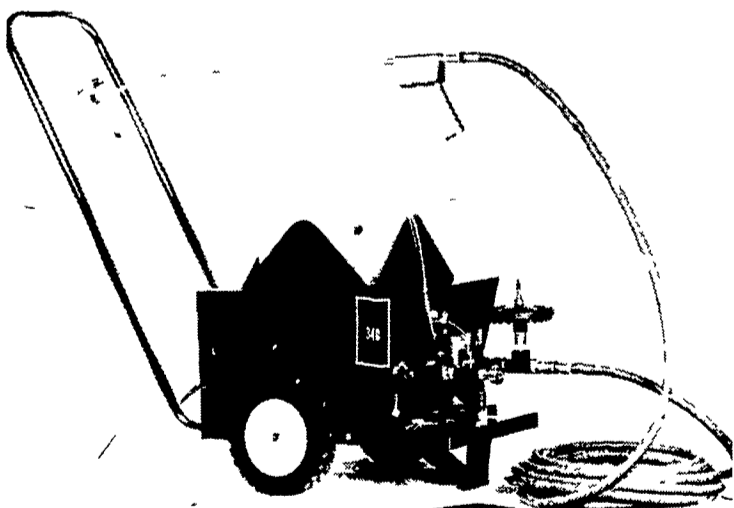
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