

Turkey types available to meet every need

LANCASTER — A traditional holiday meal means turkey and all the fixings for most families and today they have a variety of turkey forms to choose from.

According to Marcy Seckman, Extension home economist, turkey

and turkey products should meet the needs and tastes of everyone.

The most popular form again this year will be the ever-traditional whole turkey, roasted for hours to a golden-brown. You can buy whole turkey either fresh

or frozen.

Expect to pay a premium price for fresh, unfrozen turkeys, since they must be processed during the rush period prior to a holiday. Fresh turkey can be safely held at refrigerated temperatures for

approximately one week after slaughter.

Before cooking, wash a freshly-killed bird thoroughly and sniff it carefully for any sign of off-odors. The sniff test is very reliable with raw poultry.

Since frozen turkeys have been rapidly frozen immediately after slaughter, they retain their quality well during storage. Taste tests have repeatedly shown little or no flavor difference between fresh and properly defrosted frozen birds.

A new twist to the whole turkey has appeared in the past decade. You can buy a turkey frozen with a seasoned stuffing already in the body cavity. The stuffing is prepared under sanitary conditions and is ideal for those who don't have the time to prepare one. You roast a pre-stuffed turkey in its frozen state with little advance preparation. Do NOT thaw a pre-stuffed turkey before placing it in the oven to roast. Use the cooking time recommended on the package.

The consumer, of course, pays more for this convenience in two ways — the initial higher cost per pounds and the cost of the extra fuel energy required for longer cooking. Seckman stresses that the consumer must not try to save energy by defrosting the bird before roasting. You buy this type of turkey to save your energy and time.

Another concept is the self-basting turkey. An oil-type product, such as corn oil, margarine or butter, is added to the turkey meat to add succulence and greater flavor. In the self-basting process, the mixture bastes the meat and skin surface, leaving you free to enjoy your

guests while the turkey bastes itself to a golden brown. Most of the fat cooks out in the roasting process so extra calories need not be a concern.

If you prefer just breast or just dark meat or want additional meat to go along with the whole bird, you can buy turkey parts in the frozen meat section of your grocery store. Because of the added labor costs and meat content, turkey parts cost a little more than whole turkeys. A variety of turkey products are available that involve little or no waste — ideal for the small family.

The boned and tied turkey consists of light and dark meat surrounded by a natural skin cover. The advantages of this are shorter cooking time and no bones or trimmable waste. Because of the labor involved in separating the meat from the bone and the processing necessary to put the product into final form, boned and tied turkeys also cost more per pound than whole turkeys.

Another no-bones-or-waste product is the turkey pan roast. The meat consists of a light and dark meat portion which has been mixed with binding materials and formed in an aluminum pan with a natural skin covering placed on top. The pan roast may also include the cost per pound to help the consumer choose the best buy.

Still another type of boneless turkey meat product is processed in a pear shaped ham-type can, which can be roasted with little advance preparation.

You can choose turkey in a variety of forms for your holiday meal. Select the one that is just right for you, your family and your friends.

Defrost your turkey in the microwave

LANCASTER — Do you think thawing the holiday turkey is more trouble than roasting it? If you're lucky enough to have a microwave oven, Marcy Seckman, Extension home economist from York County suggests you take advantage of its speedy defrosting capability and save yourself a lot of time and effort.

The whole turkey can be left in its original wrapping for the first half of defrosting, but it's easier to spot areas that are defrosting too quickly if the bird is unwrapped from the start.

Here are a few pointers to take the guesswork out of microwave oven defrosting of your holiday turkey:

— Set the microwave oven for 50 percent of full power. This will be the "medium" setting on some ovens: "simmer" or "defrost" on others. At that power level, estimate defrosting time at about 4 to 6 minutes per pound. Check your

use and care manual for specific instructions.

— Place the unwrapped turkey in a baking dish, breast-side-down. Defrost for 1/4 of the total time.

— Shield any warm spots with foil. Turn the turkey breast-side-up and defrost for 1/4 the time.

— Turn turkey breast-side-down again. Shield leg and wing tips and any warm or brown areas.

— Reverse the baking dish so the turkey legs point to the opposite end of the oven. Defrost for 1/4 time.

— Turn the turkey breast side up again. Defrost remaining 1/4 time. Spread wings and legs from the body of the bird and loosen giblets.

— Let the turkey stand in cool water for about 1/2 hour or until neck and giblets can be removed and the interior is cool but no longer icy.

Roast the defrosted turkey according to your favorite recipe.

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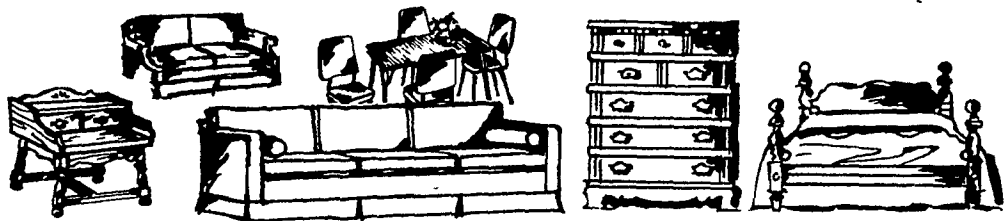
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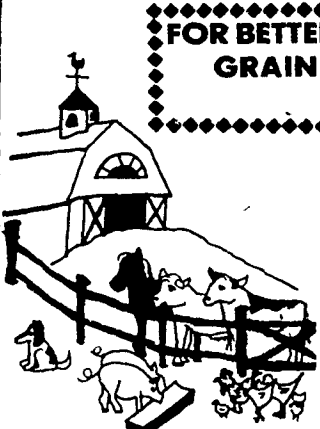
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