

Behind The Scenes

(Continued from Page B2)

public relations. It also provides Skip Fitz the chance to talk turkey to the audience he loves best — youngsters.

"It's at a time of the year — two weeks before Thanksgiving — when we're getting pretty busy. But, I get such enjoyment from watching the expressions on the kids faces, and answering their questions, that I'd never give that week up," Fitz grins.

About 1,000 children tour the farm during that week, arriving at 20-30 minute intervals. They see the large houses filled with thousands of clucking, curious turkeys, and the feed and watering systems in the production areas. A favorite part of the tour for both kids and host is the hands-on "touching" opportunity to stroke a live turkey. Fitz points out the unusual body characteristics of turkeys, such as the beard, the caruncles, and the snood.

To reinforce what they've learned, children visiting this year received a coloring page of a turkey, with names of parts to identify. As an extra special gift to their visitors, Fitz and his children made 1200 quill pens, devised from tur-

ey feathers and a pen ball-point insertion, then decorated with spray paint. A letter to parents goes along home with each child, explaining the visit, and including sales and order information, plus a cash-off discount on a large turkey.

Pricing estimates begin in late summer, with Fitz closely watching national supply and marketing data. He predicts turkey prices to be down 15 to 20 cents per pound this year from 1986 levels, as the industry recovers from two years of tight supplies which followed flock losses due to the Avian flu epidemic.

In addition to fresh and quick-frozen birds, Fitz retails smoked turkeys and turkey breasts, and turkey steaks. A no-waste meat, turkey steaks are made from fresh turkey breast meat, cut into chunks and run through a tenderizer. Each cutlet-like steak weighs about a quarter-pound, cooks quickly and can be prepared in a variety of ways.

While the next few weeks at Meadow Brook Farms will reach the proverbial "madhouse" level of activity, Skip Fitz has no intentions of taking short cuts to serve a loyal following of turkey lovers.

Telling Your Child "No"

During the holiday season, you will probably say "no" to your children many times. The best way to avoid problems is to say "no" and then give the child a reason why the request cannot be met. Keep the reason short and explain in a way the child will understand.

For example, if a child asks for an expensive toy that you cannot afford, do not say "maybe" when you really mean "no." Be honest.

Try to show a child that you

know how he or she feels. You could say "I know you are upset because you can't have something." Then follow up your comment with a reasonable explanation of why he can't have that particular toy.

Do not change your mind once you have said "no". Changing your mind may only confuse a child and make him think you don't really mean what you say.

After a several-week period of physical and mental recuperation following the holiday crunch, and catch-up sessions with the office work, plans will be underway for the first batch of day-old turkey chicks to arrive in early summer.

In spite of his food service schooling and experience, Fitz is pretty much a purist when it comes to cooking his favorite fowl. Traditional roasting, then slicing leftovers cold for sandwiches is his preferred method.

He does recommend that turkeys be roasted breast down. In that manner, juices in the meat become more concentrated in the white meat area, rather than drain away as they would during breast-up preparation.

"They don't brown quite as well that way, but the meat is more juicy and tender," advises Fitz. "The last half hour of roasting, the turkey can be turned breast up to roast,

but often the meat is so tender that it may start to fall apart instead."

Come Thanksgiving Day, Skip Fitz and family will likely just skip the traditional bird for dinner, while being thankful that so many customers are enjoying a Meadowbrook turkey.

They'll also be thankful for a very few brief days of rest before the next big holiday dinner season rolls into high gear.

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