

The Turkey Times

Volume XVII, Issue 1 ~ Fall 2006

Published by THE TURKEY FARM, New Sharon, Maine

Before the bleak mid-winter . . .

By Bob Neal

How odd that in summer the radio would play the old Christmas hymn, *In the Bleak Mid-Winter*.

But there it was one day in early September as we drove to the Crystal Spring Farmers Market in Brunswick.

The hymn put us in mind of November, which can be the bleakest month of the year in Maine, and of Thanksgiving, which helps obscure if not offset the bleakness of November.

While the busy-ness of the month helps us ignore the naked trees and gray skies of November, we work hard all month (and all year) so the bounty that is your Thanksgiving Turkey will help you overcome the bleakness of that month.

We have planned carefully for this season, perhaps more so than ever.

Last winter, stores to which we sell began asking for more holiday birds for this year. The request defied our plans to continue gearing down toward retirement, but with careful planning, we were able to reallocate about 300 birds to our Thanksgiving flocks.

We also switched suppliers this season, and all of our Thanksgiving birds were hatched at Bob's Turkey Farm in Lancaster, Mass., so we are working with a strain of broad-breasted Turkeys with which we are not very familiar. We are learning about them every day. One thing we have learned is that the supposedly slow-finishing Bob's Turkeys are growing way too fast.

We have slowed their feed consumption, but we still expect the Turkeys to dress off large this year.

Thanksgiving and Christmas 2006

So, if you're thinking about inviting more people for Thanksgiving, do it. We expect to have plenty of large Turkeys but a tight supply of small birds!

And that gets to the point of this issue of *The Turkey Times*: It is time to order your Thanksgiving and Christmas Turkeys. We have detailed information in the next three pages about how to order, where and when to pick up, etc. And this year, every customer

must order a Turkey. We have discontinued the automatic reorder system because too many people whose orders had been automatically renewed did not show up.

So remember. No order, no Turkey.

We are dressing about 1,800 birds for Thanksgiving and 400 for Christmas. Of those, nearly 600 will be available at Thanksgiving for retail sale and nearly 200 at Christmas.

We have also discontinued our pickups at Augusta and Waterville. Rather than growing, as we had hoped, both have shrunk, and last year only about 30 people picked up birds at the two drops combined. We continue the drops in Orono and Brunswick.

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What to get for the holiday feast

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TURKEY OPTIONS

Your have at least three choices for your holiday feast: farm-fresh, smoked and breast roast.

FARM-FRESH

By far the most popular choice is the whole farm-fresh Turkey, the traditional centerpiece of the Thanksgiving dinner and for many the center of the Christmas dinner as well.

Farm-fresh Turkeys this year range from about 12 or 13 pounds to 36 pounds.

Until the final month of the season, all were fed grain certified to be free of genetic engineering. In October, we had to switch from ge-clean feed ground for us by a mill in Quebec to a conventional grain milled by United Cooperative Farmers of Auburn.

The Canadian mill made three serious errors in filling orders this year, sending us wholesome grain but not of the recipe ordered. And the prices fluctuated as much as \$30 a ton from week to week, making financial planning almost impossible.

For five-and-a-half years, we have been proud to be the only farm in Maine and probably in New England using grain free of genetic engineering, and we are distressed to have had to give up genetically clean grain.

However, UCF works with its farmers to provide feeds the farmers want, and

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we will try to set up ge-clean feed through UCF for next season. We might also return to the Quebec mill if we believe it can meet our needs regularly.

Although up to 20 percent of their diet has come from conventional feed, our Turkeys remain the only truly free-range birds raised in Maine.

We keep our birds outdoors in the fresh air and on natural pasture, which they try to clear cut, from the time their feathers grow in.

All farm-fresh Turkeys are \$2.39 a pound.

SMOKED TURKEYS

Again this year, we offer smoked Turkeys, but with a twist that we believe is a great improvement.

Our smoked Turkeys will be what is known as "wet smoked." That means they will be immersed in a brine before smoking.

Our brine consists of maple syrup, salt and lemon juice. We have used this brine for smoked Turkey breast that we sell at the farmers market in Brunswick, and most weeks it sells out.

After brining, the Turkeys are smoked over native hardwoods: maple, black cherry, wild apple.

A smoked Turkey is fully cooked, so you can serve it from the fridge or you

can warm it. A 15-pound smoked Turkey contains the amount of meat in a 20- to 22- pound farm-fresh Turkey.

Smoked Turkeys sell for \$4.95 a pound. The price is for the smoked weight, not for the fresh-bird weight.

BREAST ROASTS

A whole Turkey is just too much for some households, and for those folks we offer boneless breast roasts.

The roasts are cut fresh from the birds we dress for the holiday.

They range from 3 to 6 pounds. Breast roasts cook much faster than whole Turkeys, are all white meat and have far less loss in cooking.

Fresh roasts, like fresh Turkeys, must be ordered ahead. They are \$5.25 a pound.

PICKUP OPTIONS

We have three places you can get your Turkey directly from us.

AT THE FARM

Most retail customers come to our farmstore to pick up their Turkeys.

At Thanksgiving, our farmstore will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 19, through Wednesday, Nov. 22.

At Christmas, the store will be open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Dec. 22 and 23.

It is important that customers come only between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. at both Thanksgiving and Christmas, to be certain someone is there to serve them.

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Goodbye, Hannah; Hello, Hannah

Hannah Weddle, who has helped us at the Crystal Spring Farmers Market in Brunswick for a year and a half, worked her final market on Aug. 19. She left the following week for New York University, where she is studying film-making in the highly reputed Tisch School.

Hannah graduated in June from Brunswick High School, where she was a top-10 student, ran cross country and played lacrosse. She was all-KVAC as a defender in lacrosse.

Two of her films were presented at the Maine International Film Festival in Waterville.

This young woman has a strong work ethic and a bright future. We can only hope that her time with The Turkey Farm will be-

come a fond memory.

A bright future also awaits Hannah Sprague, a sophomore at Brunswick High, who began working for us at Crystal Spring on Sept. 9. Hannah is a varsity cheerleader for the Dragons.

Early in her sophomore year, Hannah Sprague says she is pleased with her classes and teachers in such courses as Algebra II and Modern World History.

She is learning the ropes of the farmers market and is already a valued addition to our crew.

Say hello to Hannah Sprague when you are at market.

It may be inevitable that in our frame of reference Hannah Weddle at 18 has become Old Hannah and Hannah Sprague, who turned 15 on Oct. 14, has become New Hannah.

Thanks to both Hannahs, Old and New.

How to get yours for Thanksgiving and Christmas

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The store is on Route 27 in New Sharon, a mile south of Route 2.

We have early slaughter scheduled again this year, so we can accommodate requests for early pickups, and we can also serve people who need to pick up their Turkeys after each holiday.



FINDING OUR FARM

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ORONO PICKUP

Again this year, we will meet customers at Orono. The pickup for Thanksgiving will be at Silver's Auto Parts on Route 2 near the Veazie town line from 3 to 4 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 20.

The Christmas pickup at Orono will be at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 21, at Silver's

Orono customers may order other items (see Page 4) for delivery there as well.

The price of whole Turkeys at Orono is \$2.39 a pound.

BRUNSWICK PICKUP

We are expanding the length of the pickup at Brunswick this year. Our

truck and crew will be at the Crystal Spring Farm on the Pleasant Hill Road from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 22, and at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 21.

In addition to the farm-fresh and smoked Turkeys and breast roasts, we will take to Brunswick a wide selection of our year-round frozen items, such as pies and sausage.

And, customers may order other items to be delivered with their Turkey. Turkeys at Brunswick are \$2.39 a pound.

ORDERING OPTIONS

We try to make ordering a holiday Turkey as easy as possible.

Some customers come to our farmstore
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CSA needs a boost at holiday season

Thanksgiving and Christmas are popular times for customers to sign up for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)..

Those who sign on or renew during the holiday season may use their CSA account to pay for their holiday birds as well as to begin stocking up Turkey for the winter.

Through CSA, people who eat food can pay for that food ahead of time and receive a bit of a bonus from the farmer. The way we work it is that customers buy shares and then draw Turkey from the share account until the share is used up.

Shares begin at \$100 and rise in increments of \$50. We add interest on each share, and the interest rises with the amount of the share.

On a \$100 share, we add 6 percent, or \$6. On a \$150 share, we add 8 percent (\$12). And so on.

So far, 51 persons have signed on or renewed for 2006-07. This is well below our goal for the season, and we hope to have an active signup period over the next couple of months to bring us up to our goal of 67 shares.

To sign up, just send a check with the order form, and your membership in

CSA will begin immediately. The share runs for a year and can be renewed at any time.

WORK SHARES

A few sharers prefer to work for their shares. Two days of work at the farm nets a \$150 share, worth \$162 in Turkey. We have a busy season coming up, and work sharers are most welcome.

Most of the work will be preparing for Thanksgiving and Christmas. At

Thanksgiving, we have a day (slaughter) and a night (packing) shift. Both begin on Nov. 14 and run through Nov. 19. There may also be some shifts available Nov. 20-22 for delivery and retailing.

The Christmas slaughter and packing will be Dec. 18-20 and is all day work.

Work sharers may begin drawing on their share after working one day. The interest is added after the second day is worked.

To sign up for a work share, just mail in the form below or call Bob at 778-2889.

CSA Order Form

Fill out and send to The Turkey Farm, 209 Mile Hill Road, New Sharon, Maine 04955:

Please sign me up for the following share in Community Supported Agriculture:

Paid (circle) \$100 \$150 \$200 \$250 \$300 \$350 \$400
(I have enclosed a check for that amount)

Work Share, and I want to work these dates: _____

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

e-mail _____ Telephone No. _____

The last words on ordering Turkeys for the holidays

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on Route 27 in New Sharon to order their birds. The store is open from 2 to 6 p.m. on Wednesday and Friday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday.

It is also open by chance, and someone is usually there this time of year.

You can also telephone an order to us at 778-2889. We ask for your name, the size of Turkey you want and a postal or e-mail address to which we can send a confirmation.

Third, you can e-mail an order to us at turkeyfarm@gwi.net. Our website (theturkeyfarm.com) also has an order form for holiday turkeys and other items.

We confirm all orders by e-mail or by postcard so you know that we have saved a Turkey for you as close as possible to the size requested. We don't confirm by telephone.

Confirmations of early orders started going out the week of Oct. 15, and by

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the end of October will go out the day the order is received.

Finally, we wholesale holiday Turkeys to 12 stores, listed below, and you may order from any of them for pickup during their regular business hours.

The store prices will be different from ours.

SIDE ORDERS

As usual, we will have for sale items that go with your Thanksgiving feast. These include cranberries, cranberry relish, potatoes, onions, stuffing mix and bread for stuffing mix.

We'll also have some of our tasty prepared items such as smoked Turkey breast slices and Turkeyaki.

Our cranberries come from Alden Mingo in Calais. We have used his berries for several years and we and our

customers have been well pleased. The berries are of great size and color and make outstanding sauce and relish.

We use them to make batches of the almost-famous Mama Stamberg's cranberry relish first publicized on National Public Radio about 25 years ago. We'll offer the relish in pints and half-pints at holiday time.

Our potatoes come from Green Thumb Farms in Fryeburg. Brenda and Don Thibodeau year in and year out grow the best sizes of the best varieties.

Our favorite, and the one we offer, is the Norwis, a slightly yellow-fleshed potato that is perhaps the most versatile of all varieties.

Our bread is baked for us by the Livermore Falls Baking Co.

With that bread we also make our very popular stuffing mix, which is the same recipe we use for our stuffing at the Fryeburg Fair.

T H E S T O R E	BANGOR Natural Living Center 209 Longview Drive	BIDDEFORD New Morning Natural Foods 230 Main St.	DAMARISCOTTA Rising Tide Food Co-op Business Route 1	PORTLAND Food Works 47 India St.
	BAR HARBOR Town Hill Market Route 102	BLUE HILL Blue Hill Food Co-op Green's Hill Place, Route 172	ELLSWORTH John Edwards Market 158 Main St.	ROCKLAND Good Tern Food Co-op 750 Main St.
	BELFAST Belfast Co-op Store 123 High Street	BRIDGTON Morning Dew Natural Foods Sandy Creek Road (Route 117)	KENNEBUNK New Morning Natural Foods 3 York St.	SCARBOROUGH Lois' Natural Foods 152 U.S. Route 1

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Please forward