

HERITAGE TURKEYS

\$11.99/lb. (approx. 6-16 lb.)

The heritage breeds are closer to the wild turkey. They give equal amounts of white and dark meat. They cook more evenly and quickly because the legs and breasts are similar in size. They take over twice as long to grow to market weight giving the birds a chance to more fully develop their muscles. Moving daily to graze on fresh pasture and foraging for insects over this longer growing period gives the fat more complex flavors. And giving the birds full access to fresh air, sunlight and the space to exhibit their natural behaviors results in a moist meat with a fine grained texture. Even after growing for over twice as long, heritage turkeys are smaller than the white turkeys. Heritage breeds this year include: Bourbon Red, Narragansett, Standard Bronze, and Artisan.

WHITE TURKEYS

\$6.50/lb. (approx. 8-18 lb.)

The modern commercial white turkeys were developed to produce ease of processing, quick growth, and large breast meat. They have approximately 2/3 white meat and 1/3 dark meat. They tend to weigh more than the heritage breeds. Taste is similar to the heritage breeds because they are also grazing on pasture all day long eating bugs and grass alongside the heritage birds.

TURKEY INFORMATION

The key to raising our turkeys is moving them constantly to fresh pasture. The turkeys do not need any bedding, such as straw or wood shavings, to absorb their waste. Such bedding used in standard commercial production can harbor disease, attract flies, and give off concentrated ammonia fumes. Our turkey's daily access to clean green pasture allows them to exhibit their natural behaviors such as running around pecking and scratching the soil to seek insects, grass, and pebbles for their gizzards. Their movable housing gives them plenty of sunlight and fresh air. These simple natural conditions create a healthy flock and create the distinct flavor profile for our birds.

We offer fresh or frozen birds in standard White or Heritage breeds. They are packed in a plastic bag and are available on the Tuesday and Wednesday before Thanksgiving. The liver, heart, unpeeled gizzard, and neck are included. We will notify you promptly and return your deposit if we cannot fill your turkey order.

Heritage Breeds.

Flavor

Heritage turkeys contain a higher percentage of dark meat—about half of the edible weight. In addition, the meat tends to be firmer and have slightly more flavor. These traits are due to several factors. The birds have lived longer and had more time to exercise and develop their muscles, producing a well defined firm meat. Their increased lifespan has allowed more time to eat a varied diet that includes grass and insects and to create some stores of fat, resulting in a rich, complex flavor. The skin is a little thicker and can be cooked to a crispy brown.

History and Growth Characteristics

At the turn of the 21st century all heritage turkey breeds were endangered, and it is only recently that consumer demand has stimulated increased production to preserve these breeds. Heritage turkeys are domesticated breeds closer to the original lineage of the wild turkeys known to the Pilgrims and Native Americans. They retain biological characteristics enabling them to be raised more closely to the natural behavior and life cycle of their wild ancestors. Heritage turkeys have a relatively long lifespan, a much slower growth rate, and can breed and hatch naturally without human intervention. In addition, heritage breeds tend to be naturally sturdy and healthy when raised outside on pasture.

Cooking

You can find every opinion and its opposite on the internet for cooking techniques for your Thanksgiving turkey. Our advice is do not over-think it. Below is what we do.

Because the leg and the breast meat are similarly sized in our heritage breeds, it is easier to cook the bird without drying out the legs or undercooking the breast. Pre-heat oven to 400 and roast at 325-350 degrees.

Take the giblets out of the bird before putting in the oven. To prevent drying out, it is recommended that you roast 10-12 minutes for each pound rather than 15 minutes. Larger birds, over 18 pounds, normally require less cooking time—10 minutes per pound. Check temperature deep in the breast half an hour before you think the turkey might be done. **To ensure food safety, the whole turkey should be cooked to a minimum 160 degrees.** In fact, as long as you reach a minimum of 160 degrees, turkeys are very forgiving in their cooking time. It's not the end of the world if the temperature goes higher—it may get a little bit dried but it will still be delicious!

While it may be hard to wait when the bird finally comes out of the oven, let the turkey “rest” at room temperature before carving. For larger birds allow 45 minutes and 15-30 minutes for smaller birds. Resting allows the juices to reabsorb into the meat. If sliced too early, the juices will dribble out and the meat will be drier. Do not “tent” the bird with aluminum foil while it is resting as this will make the skin soggy and delay the cooling process. A fully cooked intact turkey cools slowly so do not be concerned that the turkey is getting cold.

Cost, Size and Breed

Our expenses to raise the heritage birds are higher. These slightly smaller and beautifully plumed birds take over twice as long to grow to a lower market weight, and the one day old baby poults cost considerably more. Most of our heritage birds will be between 8-16 pounds, while there will be a few smaller hens and some heavier, larger toms.

We will identify the breed you receive, but we cannot guarantee which breed you will receive. We feel the eating quality is similar. On average, the Narragansetts may weigh a pound or two less and have a generally harder constitution making them easier to raise.

Heritage Bourbon Reds This heritage breed is named for its beautiful colorful plumage and for Bourbon County KY. Developed out of earlier breeds from PA and surrounding states in the early 1900's the Reds were popular on Thanksgiving tables up to the 1930's and 40's.

Heritage Narragansett The Narragansett, named for their New England origin, has black, gray, tan, and white feathers associated with pictures of the Pilgrim's birds. This very old breed, going back to early colonial times, is prized for its excellent temperament and good maternal abilities.

Heritage Standard Bronze The Bronze was one of the most popular American Thanksgiving birds from the late 18th century through first half of the 20th century. The colonists crossed wild Eastern US turkeys with domesticated European turkeys to come up with a larger bird with a more docile temperament. The coppery-bronze colored metallic sheen on the grey and white feathers is inherited from the wild ancestors. Not to be confused with the early 20th century bred Broad Breasted Bronze. The Standard has long legs and good health attributes.

Artisan Gold These birds are derived from the Black Spanish turkeys. They were bred by the French for their gastronomic tastes, and have maintained a consistent black feathering with distinctive white marking on face and feet. They are slow growing and well adapted to the outdoors and grazing on pastures.

Standard Commercial Breed approx. (8-18 pounds) \$6.50/lb., **\$25 deposit/bird.**

Nicholas White and **Broad Breasted White** George Nicholas began breeding whites in California's Sonoma Valley in the late 1930's, bringing them to the commercial market in the late 1950's. The Broad Breasted Whites were developed out of crosses with USDA's Beltsville Small White, originally developed in the 1930's and 40's. Both Whites have become standard commercial breeds, noted for rapid growth and a large amount of white breast meat. The white color was meant to decrease the visibility of any dark quills and “pin” feathers that escaped the plucking process.

Because the breast is oversized in proportion to the legs, cooking the birds evenly presents a challenge lest the legs dry out before the breast is fully cooked. **Cook as outlined above, but check with a meat thermometer so as to remove the turkey promptly from the oven when the deepest part of breast reaches 160 degrees.** Stuffing the turkey cavity can add to the necessary cooking time and increase the risk of drying of the legs. **Note: USDA does not recommend stuffing a turkey. However, if you do, to insure food safety, the center of stuffing should be 165 degrees, according to USDA.**

Our birds average 8-18 pounds, but we do have a few smaller and larger birds as well. When fed our organic grain and allowed to exercise and forage insects and grass on our organic pastures, these birds develop fine textured and flavorful predominantly white meat that is tender and juicy. Because of their exercise and pasture based diet, these birds develop more flavor than birds raised in large confined poultry houses and sold in most large grocery stores.