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TURKEY 101: CHOOSING THE PERFECT TURKEY FOR YOUR THANKSGIVING TABLE

Ohio turkey farmers share tips on how to select a delicious turkey to serve at your holiday celebration

COLUMBUS – Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and soon Ohio families will be heading to their local grocery store to pick up turkeys to serve at their holiday feasts. As they do so, the Ohio Poultry Association (OPA) is offering tips on how to pick the perfect turkey.

“A delicious Ohio turkey is a long-standing tradition at many Thanksgiving dinners; actually, 29 percent of all turkey consumed is eaten during the holiday season,” said Jim Chakeres, OPA executive vice president. “There are several tips to keep in mind when selecting a turkey to prepare for any Thanksgiving feast.” He added that Ohio ranks 10th in the country in turkey production.

Ohio turkey experts recommend the following tips for selecting the perfect turkey:

- *Size.* To determine what size turkey to buy, estimate that each person will eat one pound of uncooked meat. Add an additional pound per person to ensure an ample amount of leftovers (for great turkey leftover recipes, visit www.eatturkey.com).
- *Frozen or Fresh.* Frozen turkeys are frozen immediately after processing to 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below and held at that temperature until packaged. Fresh turkeys are deep chilled after packaging. Whether purchasing fresh or frozen turkey, proper cooking and handling of the bird will ensure a delicious turkey feast.
- *Pre-basted or un-basted.* Turkeys usually are sold two different ways: pre-basted (ingredients such as oil, broth and spices are already added) and un-basted. Either way is tasty, it just depends on personal preference and whether or not the cook wants to do the basting.
- *Save.* Consumers can take advantage of supermarket specials by purchasing more than one turkey. A whole frozen turkey may be stored in the freezer for up to 12 months.

“When picking out the right turkey for Thanksgiving, consumers should also know what the labels mean before leaving for the grocery store,” said Chakeres. “From organic to free-range and frozen to fresh – all of these labels can be very confusing, especially for many new cooks.”

For example, turkeys may be labeled as “hens” or “tom turkeys.” Toms are usually bigger (about 18 to 32 pounds) while hens tend to be smaller (about eight to 16 pounds). However, it’s important to note that none of these types of turkeys are better than the other, and are solely at the preference of the consumer.

For more information on purchasing tips, turkey recipes or nutritional benefits, visit the OPA Web site at www.ohiopoultry.org.

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