



DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Ah, Thanksgiving: That special Thursday on which you can blow off work, sit around the house, watch some TV or livestream a few holiday specials and stuff yourself with mashed potatoes, mac and cheese, cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie and lots and lots of turkey.

Americans eat about 46 million turkeys — that’s about 735 million pounds of turkey — each Thanksgiving. Here’s just about everything you should know about your favorite seasonal fowl:

TALKING TURKEY ABOUT TURKEY TRIVIA

Only male turkeys gobble.

Turkeys make a number of sounds, but the gobble call is only made by males during mating season. This is why male turkeys are called “gobblers” and females are called “hens.”

Turkeys can change colors.

You can tell a turkey’s emotions by the color of its head. A turkey’s head can change from red to blue depending how excited or calm it is. The more intense the color, the more intense the turkey’s emotions.

Turkeys can see better than humans can.

Turkeys can see three times better than humans. Their eyesight covers 270 degrees. Unlike a lot of animals, turkeys can also see colors.

Turkeys use their snoods to attract mates.

That fleshy flap that hangs over the beak of a male turkey is called a snood. Female turkeys prefer males with longer snoods.



USDA

You can identify the gender of a turkey by its poop.

The droppings of a male turkey are shaped a little like the letter J. The droppings of a female turkey are more spiral shaped.

Benjamin Franklin wanted the turkey to be our national symbol.

The bald eagle is “a bird of bad moral character,” Franklin said, because it is a scavenger and steals from other birds. The turkey, on the other hand, is “a much more respectable bird,” and is “a bird of courage.” It’s not clear how serious Franklin was with this.

What do you do with too much turkey?

For Thanksgiving 1953, someone at Swanson foods accidentally ordered 260 tons of frozen turkeys. One employee had the idea of ordering 5,000 aluminum trays, filled them with sliced turkey and side dishes and invented the modern TV dinner. Swanson would sell 10 million turkey TV dinners the next year.

Pardon me, Mr. President.

John F. Kennedy was the first president to spare the life of a turkey donated to be his Thanksgiving meal. But it wasn’t until 1989 that President George H.W. Bush officially started the White House tradition of “pardoning” a turkey each year.



THE WHITE HOUSE



MTM ENTERPRISES

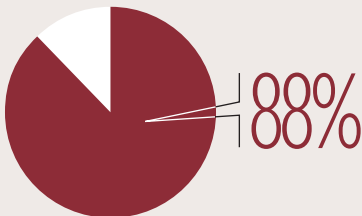
“As God as my witness, I thought turkeys could fly.”

Arthur Carlson
General manager of fictional Cincinnati radio station WKRP, in an episode that aired Oct. 30, 1978.

Guess what? Turkeys can fly.

Some of them can, at least. Wild turkeys can fly up to 55 mph in short bursts. However, the domesticated turkeys that we eat on Thanksgiving are specifically bred to be twice as heavy as a wild turkey. Those, in fact, *cannot* fly.

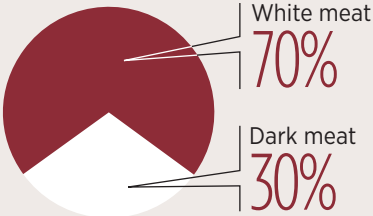
Percentage of Americans who eat turkey on Thanksgiving:



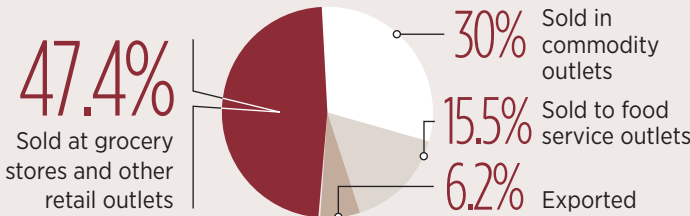
Pounds of turkey eaten annually by the average American:

16

Yielded by a typical 15-pound turkey:

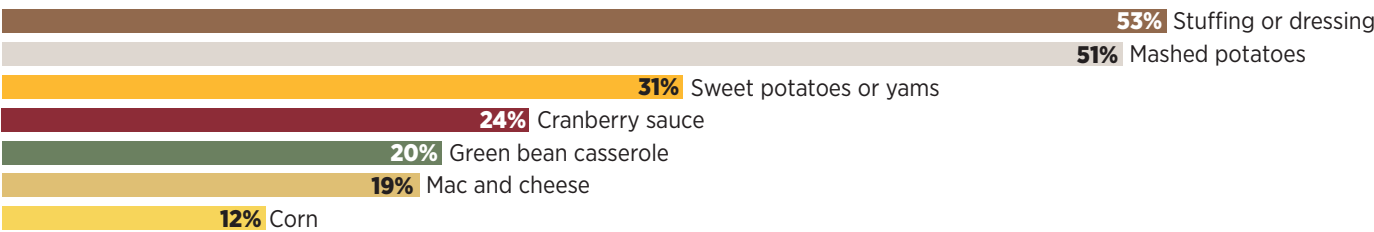


Of the turkeys produced annually in the U.S.:



DON'T FORGET THE SIDE DISHES

Thanksgiving side dishes preferred by Americans:



AND, FOR DESSERT ...

What Americans prefer to finish off their Thanksgiving meal:



Sources: Census.gov, Yougov.com, Vox, Business Insider, Good Housekeeping, World Animal Protection, Trafalgar.com, University of Illinois Extension, American Farm Bureau Federation, Statista.com, Classic TV History Blog, History.com