

AGRICULTURE

Turkey for Thanksgiving

Five hundred million pounds of turkey is marching on 70 million sturdy drumsticks towards the ovens, with large birds for hotels and small ones for families.

By FRANK THONE

► FIVE HUNDRED million pounds of turkey is marching on 70 million sturdy drumsticks towards the Thanksgiving ovens. It is the grandest army of our real national bird that has ever laid down its collective life for our country, with the sole exception of the Great Gobbler Year of 1940.

If you count out vegetarians and infants without teeth, that tonnage of turkey-meat divides up at a per capita rate of about four pounds for each inhabitant of these fortunate United States. In case you don't find that much draped over the dressing on your civilian plate, remember that the boys and girls in the Armed Services will be eating at first table and accept your slightly diminished portion in a spirit proper to the day.

Elaborate preparations have been made to see to it that a turkey dinner is served to everyone in the Services, even to men under fire in front-area foxholes. They may have to eat with a drumstick in one hand and a grenade in the other—but they'll get their turkey. Unsung, undecorated QM heroes will see to that.

Recruiting Turkeys

Recruiting this huge horde of turkeys for our national feast-day has been more than just a job for butchers, refrigeration men and transport workers. Before they ever got to work, indeed before the beginning of the war itself, scientists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture and in several state experiment stations were at work on the Thanksgiving bird, remodeling it for greater efficiency as a source of good eating.

This reconstruction of the turkey has taken two opposite directions. For one purpose, we wanted ever bigger and bulkier birds; for another, the breeders' blueprints called for smaller, more streamlined dimensions.

For the purpose of providing Thanksgiving dinners in batches of hundreds or thousands, the big turkeys of our grandparents' farmyards needed to be made even bigger. And since white meat is always the preferred portion (even

when you're too polite to say outright that you want it), the breeders not only selected their stocks for greater all-over bulk but had an especial eye out for as much weight forward of amidships as possible.

Their efforts, over a decade or so, have produced a strain labeled with the alliterative title of Broad-Breasted Bronze. With plumage of all autumnal hues condensed, the real glory of this bird is hidden under its breast-feathers, where an actual increase of 20 per cent in white meat has been brought about.

Ready for War

Designed for peacetime purposes such as the hotel and restaurant trade and the provisioning of hospitals, college dining halls and other similar large-scale institutions, these super-turkeys were all set for war, too, and ready to cope with the hearty appetites of hard-working, hard-fighting men in uniform—not to forget

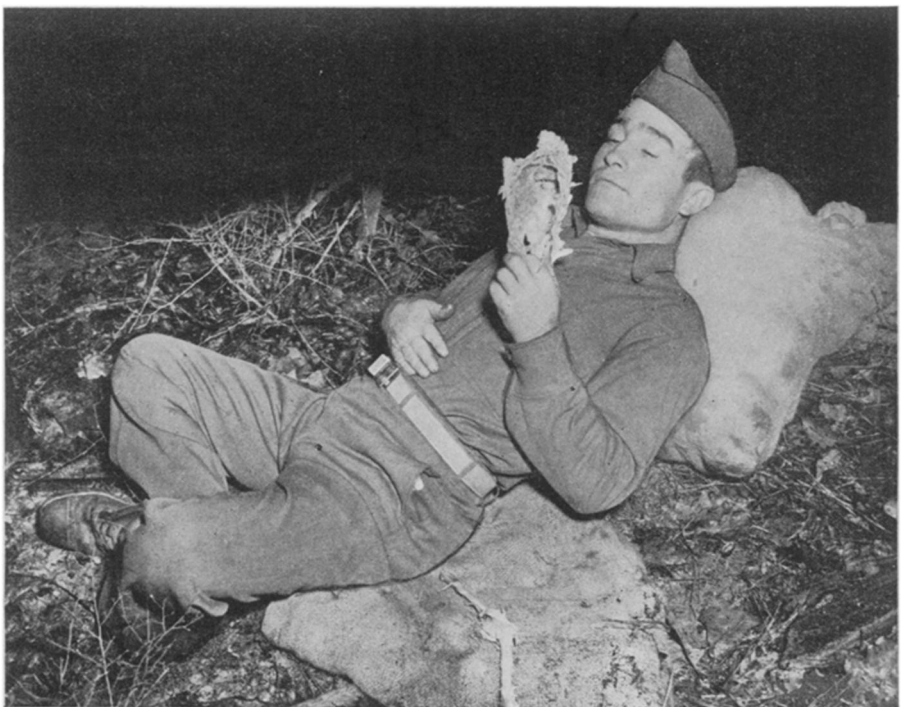
the WACS, WAVES and the other girls in uniform, who aren't exactly peckish about their eating, either, nowadays.

While the turkey breeders were working up these bigger and breastier bronze birds for the large-scale dining-room business, they were putting the brakes on size for the individual-family fowl. Families aren't as big as they were a couple of generations ago, neither do all the children and grandchildren foregather at the Old Folks' farm on Thanksgiving Day. Therefore a smaller turkey was in order.

Streamlined Bird

Product of the scientists' efforts, so far, has been a somewhat streamlined bird, the young hens having a dressed weight of around seven or eight pounds, the young toms tipping the scales at 12 or 14. Though the new turkey is small it is not thin; there is plenty of white meat, and the flesh is of superior quality. This is the kind of turkey you are likely to get for the home table, now that the Boy (and maybe the Girl, too) is off attending a war.

Scientists haven't (Turn to page 332)



NOT BAD!—A successful job of packing has just been completed by the soldier seen in this official Signal Corps photograph. Table linen and silverware may have been lacking, but the turkey was there all right!

Do You Know?

Crocodiles may be called present day relatives of the dinosaurs.

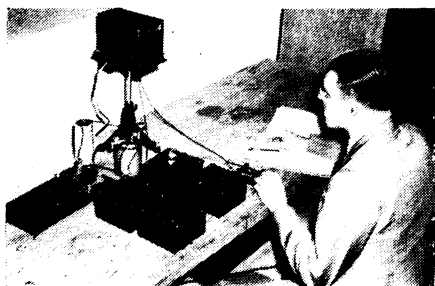
Sealed beam *auto headlight* lamps are used as landing lights for warplanes.

About 90% of all *salmon* caught by United States fishermen is taken in Alaska.

Some *desert plants* have a rapid growth to finish their growing cycle before the hot weather begins.

The quick-freezing of winter oysters began shortly before the present war; *frozen oysters* will probably be plentiful again in postwar days.

The electric *refrigerator* should stand three or four inches from the wall behind it and should have a ten-inch space above it to permit circulation of air so that the condenser coils may properly cool.



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Books of the Week

THE ABC OF PHYSICS—Jerome S. Meyer—*Dial Press, Inc.*, 346 p., illus., \$3.50.
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, PROCEEDINGS, Oct. 18, 1944—*Am. Philosophical Soc.*, 357 p., paper, illus., \$1, (Vol. 88, No. 4).
A. S. T. M. STANDARDS ON TEXTILE MATERIALS—A. S. T. M. Committee D-13—*Am. Soc. for Testing Materials*, 473 p., paper, illus., \$2.75.
A COURSE IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF MECHANICS—Morton C. Mott-Smith and Marjorie Van de Water—*Infantry Journal*, 188 p., illus., paper, 25c.
DAMNED TO GLORY—Robert L. Scott, Jr.—*Scribner*, 228 p., \$2.50.
DELAWARE'S BURIED PAST, Story of Archaeological Adventure—C. A. Weslager—*Univ. of Pa. Press*, 170 p., illus., \$2.50.
INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICAL LOGIC, Part I—Alonzo Church—*Princeton Univ. Press*, 118 p., paper, \$1.75.
THE LITERARY MARKET PLACE, 1944—

Bowker, 113 p., paper, \$2., 4th ed.
LOOK TO THE FRONTIERS, a Geography for the Peace Table—Roderick Peattie—*Harper*, 246 p., illus., \$3.
PLASTIC MOLDING AND PLANT MANAGEMENT—D. A. Dearle—*Chemical Pub.*, 196 p., illus., \$3.50.
PRODIGAL GENIUS, the Life of Nikola Tesla—John J. O'Neill—*Washburn*, 326 p., illus., \$3.75.
RE-EDUCATION IN A NURSERY GROUP, A STUDY IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY—Ruth Wendell Washburn—*Nat. Research Council*, 175 p., paper, illus., \$2, (Monographs of the Soc. for Research in Child Development, Vol. IX, No. 2).
THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE SCIENTIFIC TRENDS OF HIS TIME—Charles A. Browne—*Chronica Botanica*, 423 p., paper, illus., \$1.25, (Chronica Botanica, Vol. 8, No. 3).
TRICHINOSIS—Sylvester E. Gould—C. C. Thomas, 356 p., illus., \$5.
Science News Letter, November 18, 1944

From Page 330

finished the job on either the big or the little new turkey—they can always see room for improvement, anyway. They think there's still a chance to increase the proportion of white meat, and to decrease the time it takes to plump the birds up for market.

From the raiser's point of view, there's the important problem of hatchability of the eggs to consider. Turkey eggs have always had lower fertility and hatchability than those of other domestic fowl; the new strains have been brought to a point where eight out of every ten eggs put in the incubator will produce a turkey chick—a really good score.

Under wartime conditions, feeding the turkeys has presented problems for the poultry nutritionist. Dried skimmilk, once the standard source for high-quality protein feed, has been diverted to direct human use to a tremendous extent. A satisfactory replacement has been found in soybean protein. Vitamins for the enrichment of the young turk's diet have had to be obtained from new sources, too: one has been a by-product of industrial alcohol fermentation, itself vastly increased to supply war industries.

Present fighting in the Danube valley, and the Balkans generally, carries us into another part of the turkey's story—the apparent historical background of its name. For although the turkey is a strictly American bird, its name seems to have become attached to it in this alien quarter of the globe, back in the days when much of the Danubian country and all of the Balkan peninsula were in-

cluded in the Turkish empire.

Such American products as the turkey, corn, pumpkin and navy beans did not find their way directly from Spain into northwestern Europe, during the early days of discovery and exploration. The Turks got them from the Spaniards and carried them into the rich farm area of the lower Danube. From there they worked their way into the German and Italian lands, (*Turn to page 344*)

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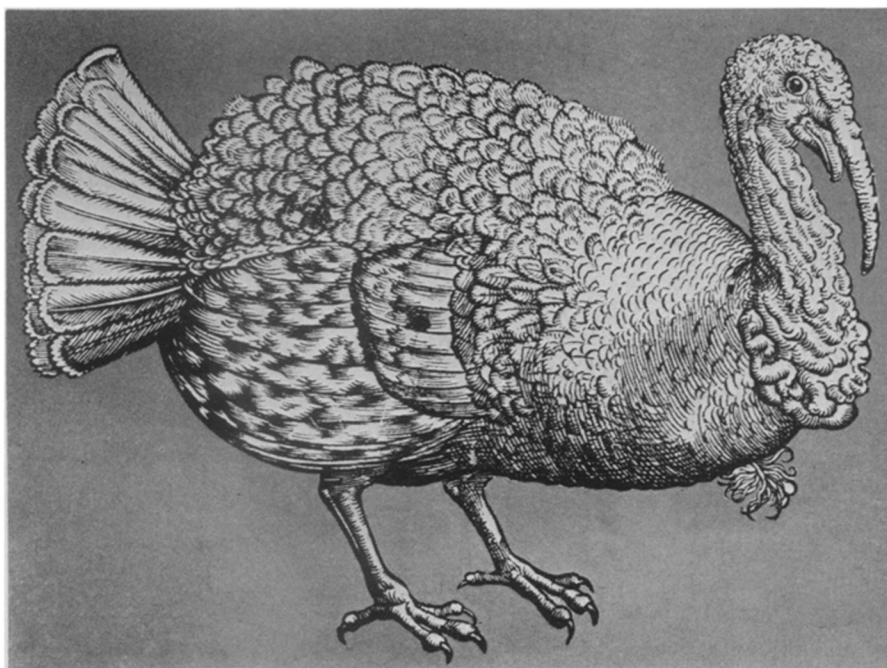
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FIRST TURKEY PICTURE—Believed to be the first picture of a turkey ever printed in a book, this curious illustration from Conrad Gesner's 400-year-old *Historia Animalium* is "modern" in at least one respect: the abnormally long forward part of the body would bear plenty of white meat.

From Page 332

and so eventually into France, the Low Countries and England.

Many of these American products picked up the misnomer "Turkish" on this roundabout journey. Their true origin remained obscure to western Europeans, who were on hostile terms with the Turks most of the time.

However that may be, within 50 years after Columbus' first voyage, the great German botanist Leonhart Fuchs was publishing a picture and description of the corn plant under the name of Turkish corn, and in the same book he called one kind of pumpkin a Turkish cucumber.

At about the same time, another noted naturalist, the German-Swiss Konrad von Gesner, figured and described the turkey as the "Indian, or Calcutta fowl." Because it had come via the Near East, he assumed it had come from the East Indies, instead of the West Indies.

Although the turkey is still known in various Continental languages by names that perpetuate this error ("dindon" in French, for example) by the time it got to England it was simply the "Turkey bird." And so the name has stuck.

Science News Letter, November 18, 1944

This Palatable Variety . . .

liver, heart, tongue, sandwich meat, bacon, bologna, frankfurters, liver sausage, salami, etc. . . . deserve dietary recognition not only for their high protein content but as good sources of the vitamins as well.* Their palatable taste, their availability, and their relatively reasonable cost merit frequent inclusion in the diet.

*"Canadian bacon, summer sausage, and sandwich meat contain larger amounts of thiamine than fresh beef, veal or lamb but smaller amounts than fresh pork . . . Of the fresh organ meats studied heart was found to be the richest in thiamine . . . Liver and tongue contained about the same amount of thiamine as muscle meat . . . Liver sausage contains nearly 3 or 4 times as much riboflavin as any of the other prepared meats . . . The other prepared meats fall in the same range as fresh muscle meats . . . The nicotinic acid contents of the prepared meats and fresh muscle meat are about the same . . ." (McIntire, J. M.; Schweigert, B. S.; Herbst, E. J., and Elvehjem, C. A.: Vitamin Content of Variety Meats, *J. Nutrition* 28:35, July 10, 1944.)



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