

## Turkey Facts

- + At one time, the turkey and the bald eagle were each considered as the national symbol of America. Benjamin Franklin was one of those who argued passionately on behalf of the turkey. Franklin felt the turkey, although "vain and silly", was a better choice than the bald eagle, whom he felt was "a coward".
- + According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, more than 45 million turkeys are cooked and eaten in the U.S. at Thanksgiving—that's one sixth of all turkeys sold in the U.S. each year. American per capita consumption of turkeys has soared from 8.3 pounds in 1975 to 18.5 pounds last year.
- + Last year, 2.7 billion pounds of turkey was processed in the United States.
- + In 1995, retail sales of turkey reached approximately \$4.4 billion. They are expected to reach \$4.7 billion in 2000.
- + Age is a determining factor in taste. Old, large males are preferable to young toms (males) as tom meat is stringy. The opposite is true for females: old hens are tougher birds.
- + A turkey under sixteen weeks of age is called a *fryer*, while a young *roaster* is five to seven months old.
- + Turkeys are the only breed of poultry native to the Western Hemisphere.
- + Turkeys have great hearing, but no external ears. They can also see in color, and have excellent visual acuity and a wide field of vision (about 270 degrees), which makes sneaking up on them difficult. However, turkeys have a poor sense of smell (what's cooking?), but an excellent sense of taste.
- + Domesticated turkeys cannot fly. Wild turkeys, however, can fly for short distances at speeds up to 55 miles per hour. They can also reach speeds of 25 miles per hour on the ground.
- + Turkeys sometimes spend the night in trees.
- + Turkeys can have heart attacks: turkeys in fields near the Air Force test areas over which the sound barrier was broken were known to drop dead from the shock of passing jets
- + The ballroom dance known as the Turkey Trot was named for the short, jerky steps a turkey makes.