

Locally Grown

Frank Reese, Good Shepard Turkey Ranch, Lindsborg, Kansas

Frank Reese is committed to bringing the taste of heritage turkeys back to the Thanksgiving table.

From the time of the Pilgrims through the 1950's the turkey population was diverse. A descendent from the American wild turkey called the Standard Bronze and European varieties were crossed and gave birth to Bourbon Reds, Jersey Buffs, Black Spanish, Narragansetts, and others. Today we call these birds heritage turkeys. These magnificent birds with their colorful feather patterns strutted proudly across small farms. However, by the 1960's heritage turkeys had been driven from the market by the industrial broad-breasted white. By 1990 the heritage turkeys were very near extinction. By 1997, only 1,335 breeding heritage turkeys were left, according to the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy.

Frank is a leader of a growing movement to save from extinction these magnificent flavorful turkeys our grandparents enjoyed on their Thanksgiving table. Frank's passion started at the age of five. Frank recalls going to the Trow Farm and seeing 5,000 Bronze Turkeys. At the state fair, when Frank was eleven years old he met Norman Kardosh, "The Turkey Man." Over the years Norman became a good friend and teacher, sharing his vast knowledge with Frank. Frank bought his first trio of birds from Norman over 40 years ago and he has maintained and improved the flock over the years.

Today, Frank maintains his hatchery and heritage turkey breeding stock and has a network of small turkey farmers around Lindsborg, Kansas. They raise about 10,000 heritage turkeys for the holiday sales. The turkeys are raised 'free-range' outdoors in fields and roost in barns at night. They mate naturally and are not artificially inseminated, like industrial turkeys. They are grown vegetarian fed without antibiotics. They run, fly, scratch for worms, and engage in social interactions and perform instinctive behaviors essential to their health and wellbeing. Heritage Turkeys can be viewed by webcam at www.reeseturkeys.com.

Frank travels the country speaking on heritage turkeys. Those who have heard Frank speak tell of his passion, knowledge, and never-ending dedication to this cause. He talks of animal welfare rights, preserving genetic diversity, and preserving a slice of Americana.

Over the last few years, Frank, has been able to enjoy some rewards from his years of dedication to preserving the heritage turkeys. Slow Foods, Heritage Foods, and cutting edge cooks have come forth to aid in the cause. People are becoming more aware of what they eat and how it is produced. However, it is the superior TASTE that wins consumers over. The meat is moist and firm, full of flavor, and does not have to be injected with solutions like industrial birds. Good Shepherd's turkeys have consistently been voted the best tasting bird on the market by chefs and food writers alike. Frank's heritage turkey was voted the best bird by *Bon Appetit*, *Saveur* and *Food & Wine*. *The New York Times*' 2006 blind tasting of turkeys, conducted by Marian Burros, confirmed that the white and dark meat "delivered the essence of old-fashioned turkyness. The white was succulent: even the richer dark meat was tender. If this turkey were a wine, it would be a fine old red."

Good Natured Family Farms is partnering with Good Shepard Turkey Ranch this holiday season and will bring Fresh Heritage Turkeys to your neighborhood Hen House Markets. The supply will be limited so reserve yours early!

Turkey Trivia – for a call out box (here or anywhere else that’s needed)

It takes almost twice as long to raise a heritage turkey compared to today’s industrial bird and requires up to 5 times as much land space.