



AS IT IS

Thanksgiving Plans and Turkey Sales Uncertain

November 18, 2020

On the fourth Thursday in November, many people in the United States celebrate Thanksgiving.

People usually gather with family or in some cases friends, sometimes called “Friendsgiving.” Whatever you call the holiday, one thing is **certain** – it will include a big meal. And traditionally, the centerpiece of the Thanksgiving meal is the turkey.

However, like so many other things in 2020, Thanksgiving will be different this year. Because of concerns over COVID-19, millions of Americans are expected to hold smaller celebrations.

Kroger is the largest food **chain** in the United States. Its research shows that 43 percent of buyers are planning to celebrate Thanksgiving only with their **immediate families**.

This has left turkey farmers and food sellers worried about turkey supplies.

“For months now, we’ve been thinking about whether people will even be having holidays – let alone the size of their holiday. And that’s such a big piece of the turkeys that we’re raising and them being the centerpiece of usually large family gatherings.”

Dede Boies is owner of Root Down Farm in Pescadero, California. It is a female-owned and operated farm that raises turkeys and other animals. Boies told The Associated Press that her Thanksgiving turkeys were born in May. So, she has spent months thinking about how COVID-19 might affect the holiday.

“So, for months we’ve just been like, ‘Are people going to want turkeys? Are they going to want big turkeys?’ It’s a little bit **scary** because I don’t actually know. I mean, usually - this time last year, we’ve sold most of them.”

Boies harvested some turkeys earlier this year. This is a risky move because the birds gain a lot of fat and **flavor** in their final few weeks. But she thinks buyers may want smaller birds. She is also offering more chickens and ducks.

“So, we’ve been playing with some different ideas and one is to just harvest the birds a little earlier. So, they’re a little smaller.”

Walmart, another major U.S. store chain, says it will still carry plenty of whole turkeys. But it will also offer 30 percent more turkey breasts - smaller parts of the bird - for people who may not want to cook a whole turkey.

One industry organization, however, is sending a very different message to turkey buyers this year - go big!

Beth Breeding is Vice President of Marketing for the National Turkey Federation. She says people should consider buying a big turkey for one important and traditional reason - leftovers.

“While the size of the gathering might change, the size of the turkey certainly doesn’t have to. Because when you’ve been cooking as much as we have this year, leftovers are a hot **commodity**.”

Rebecca Welch agrees. She is a senior **brand** manager at Butterball, a famous American turkey producer. Butterball usually sells 30 percent of America’s 40 million Thanksgiving turkeys.

Welch told the AP that people should not be afraid to go big this year. She said, “It’s just as easy to cook a large turkey as it is a smaller one.”

Dede Boies says she just wants her birds to be part of a great holiday celebration.

“We’ve now invested so much time and energy and love into these birds. And the whole point is that they go, and they are celebrated with, you know, people for these great meals. So, we’re just really hoping that still happens.”

I'm Anna Matteo.

AP Video Journalist Haven Daley contributed to this story from San Francisco. AP Writer Danica Kirka also contributed from London. Anna Matteo adapted the report for VOA Learning English. Bryan Lynn was the editor.

Words in This Story

certain – *adj.* not having any doubt about something

chain – *n.* a group of businesses that have the same name and sell the same products or services

immediate family – *n.* a person's smallest family unit, consisting of the closest relatives, such as parents, siblings, and children. An immediate family may contain both biological relatives and those related through marriage.

scary – *adj.* causing fright

flavor – *n.* the quality of something that you can taste

commodity – *n.* something or someone that is useful or valued

brand – *n.* a category of products that are all made by a particular company and all have a particular name
