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INVITING IDEAS

'Thanksgiving to go' offers change of pace



RUTH MOSSOK JOHNSTON

Holiday gatherings can be filled with family and friends, as well as hard work. Sometimes it involves major household cleanup, sometimes making creative and time-consuming holiday decorations, or just the emotional acrobatics of dealing with relatives."

For a change of pace this Thanksgiving, give yourself a holiday, and do a "Thanksgiving to Go." This doesn't mean sending the disruptive or controversial family member away — it means letting members of the food industry provide you with the perfect Thanksgiving meal.

With busy work schedules and other obligations, more and more people are turning to easily prepared holiday meals. There are many options, it just depends on just how much you want to spend.

What's available, lots — this is a growing trend, here are some suggestions:

■ Greenberg's Smoked Turkeys straight from Texas to your front door in a matter of days. The Greenbergs have been smoking only one thing for the past 57 years — turkeys. These wonderful smoked birds are hand-rubbed inside and out with a secret seasoning mix of spices and salt, completely cooked to perfection over hickory wood in the Greenberg's brick smoke houses, and frozen to maintain their freshness — there are no preservatives! Your beautiful completely cooked bird arrives triple bagged and ready for the trimmings. Place it in your refrigerator until ready for use in six to eight days after its arrival, or you can keep it frozen in your freezer for six months.

The smoked turkey skin is not usually eaten, but makes a great addition to your bones for soup. You can serve this moist delicious turkey; hot, room temperature, or cold. Greenberg's smoked turkeys are available year-round. They weigh 6 to 15 pounds, you get the entire bird, they are not sold as breasts. The cost is \$3 per pound plus UPS shipping charges, and a 25 cent handling charge. Greenberg's Smoked Turkeys, Inc., P.O. Box 4818, Tyler, Texas 75712, (903) 595-0725. They sell over 100,000 smoked birds nationwide each year. No credit cards accepted, they do take out-of-state checks.

■ The Ritz-Carlton, Dearborn offers a feast to go. Executive Chef Christian Alunno will be preparing a superb gourmet meal fit for royalty. This holiday feast includes a 14 pound roasted turkey with Giblet Gravy, Walnut, Apricot, Cornbread Stuffing, Cranberry Chutney, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Creamed Spinach, Butternut Squash, Glazed Carrots and Parsnips, a Sweet Potato Casserole, and choice of four desserts.

Pumpkin Pie, Apple Pie, Caramel Walnut Tart or Cranberry Linzer Torte. This glorious feast will serve 6 to 8 guests, and dietary restrictions can be accommodated. The cost is \$125. Your personalized dinner will be packaged and ready for pick-up at the Ritz's front door on Thanksgiving Day. To place your order, call (313) 441-2100 Extension 464 or fax (313) 441-2121.

■ Kroger's — your local Kroger's store is ready to make your holiday easier. Kroger's offers two different packaged deals — The Turkey Express, which includes a 10-12 pound Turkey, 2 pounds of stuffing, and 1 pound of gravy for \$19.99, or the Traditional Turkey Dinner: 10-12 pound Turkey, 4 pounds of stuffing, 2 pounds of gravy, 2 pounds of cranberry sauce, 12 rolls, and a choice of Apple Pie or a Pumpkin Pie for \$29.99. Call your local Kroger store for details.

■ Farmer Jack's — makes entertaining easy with dinner with a dinner that serves 8-10. It includes a fully cooked turkey, 2 pounds of stuffing, 2 pounds of mashed sweet potatoes with mini marshmallows, 2 pounds mashed white potatoes, 2 pounds of green beans, 2 pounds turkey gravy, and 2 pounds of cranberry relish for \$26.95. Dinners are frozen and will need to be thawed in the refrigerator for at least 48 hours. To place your order, call (313) 270-1469 or visit your local Farmer Jack.

■ Honey Baked Ham Company — is now making delicious Honey Baked Turkey Breasts — roasted or hickory smoked, or a fully-cooked whole Smoked Turkey available in 10 to 12 pounds. The famous honey baked flavor we all know and love from their dynamite ham, is used on the spiral sliced boneless turkey breasts. These yummy birds are great warmed or at room temperature. The cost of the spiral-cut smoked is \$6.49 per pound, the roasted is \$6.19 per pound, and the whole smoked turkey is \$2.39 per pound. Place your order early, and be prepared to wait in line, however their talented staff gets you through as soon as possible.

Honey Baked Hams, Inc., totaling 260 stores in 35 states, has three stores in the metro Detroit area. Check your White Pages or call: (810) 641-8300.

If I can't convince you to take it easy this Thanksgiving — buy a turkey and call The Butterball Turkey Talk-Line with any questions - (800) 323-4848. Professionally trained home economists and nutritionists are available to answer questions related to thawing, roasting, carving, as well as safety tips. Another resource for Turkey information is the National Turkey Federation, (703) 435-7206.

Ruth Mossok Johnston is an author and food columnist who lives in Franklin. To leave a Voice Mail message for Ruth, dial (313) 663-2097, mailbox 1002.

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