

## **THOSE WITH TASTES FOR WILD TURKEY LIKELY EAT WELL- PREPARED SAMPLES**

**06/15/99**

There I was again on the end of the limb casting about for a subject for next week's column. I procrastinate all week trying to come up with a topic. It's hard to know if something I am concerned with will be of interest to others. Occasionally someone will mention something about a previous column that will jar my reverie. Dr. Larry Hogan, our local chiropractor, provided that impetus this week with his query on how wild turkey tastes.

My answer was not very flattering, nor did it lend much credence to the concept of the original Thanksgiving feast supposedly enjoyed by the Pilgrims and Americans.

In short, my experience with the culinary attributes of the wild turkey has been disappointing. I will admit it may have been influenced in direct proportion to the limited number of birds I have taken and sampled.

The first wild turkey I shot was a huge 24-pounder and obviously very old and tough. I was advised by an old hand to only save the breast. It is sliced, the pieces dripped in batter and sautéed in hot oil. Although not the traditional method for preparing turkey, it was quite good.

If you have ever dressed a wild turkey it is easy to question the merits of how it will be to eat. Long and lean, they look more like a dinosaur than their domestic counterpart.

One of the problems I have with any game bird is that it's nearly impossible to pick them and leave the skin intact. They nearly always have to be skinned and that detracts from their looks, eye appeal and flavor.

The second bird I killed was a jake, or young bird, reputedly the most eminent eating of the spices. Determined to make it the supreme test fare, I very tediously picked every feather. The end result left me with a very presentable looking bird. Leaving nothing more to chance, I turned to the expert in the turkey-roasting field in our family to prepare it.

A generous specimen of 12 or more pounds, I graciously invited several others to partake of the exotic repast. The good Lord, fortunately, was kind in that respect since all

my intended victims had other commitments. The breast was barely palatable and the balance too tough for human dentures. I whittled it off the bone and our canine family members ate it with gusto.

I was spurred forward in my quest to determine if wild turkey is, indeed, good eating by someone, I cannot remember who, telling me they had one so tender, “I believe you could even eat the feet.”

Now, I will admit that two failed attempts by a rank amateur does not necessarily prove a point. I am sure that there is- unlike the guy who told me beaver tail is delicious – the possibility that some turkeys or parts thereof, may, indeed, be good. Until I learn otherwise, in the future I will stick to the exclusive use of the breast and preparing it as I outlined above.

It was interesting as to the number of questions my turkey column prompted about their edibility. I even fielded a call from my brother in California who fancies himself as somewhat of an epicure.

Unfortunately, they were talking to the wrong guy if they expected an endorsement for the wild gobbler. From some of the previous reports I have heard, there are many out there who disagree. I hope someone proves me wrong, although I do not need another excuse to hunt them.

To make a long story short, until then the Butterball remains supreme.