

Ground turkey—a great nutritional buy

In the mid-70s a new product was introduced in fresh meat departments. It was ground turkey—a great buy nutritionally. It happened about the time ground beef, an all-time favorite, began to rise in price. There was a brief flurry of activity. People bought ground turkey so fast markets couldn't keep it in stock. Then the demand died off as fast as it began.

What happened? Homemakers, always alert for a bargain, decided that the Thanksgiving favorite should taste good in a new, more usable form. With few recipes available especially adapted to ground turkey, they figured that one ground meat was like another. They used the ground turkey in their favorite ground beef recipe.

Ground turkey, however, has a lower fat content, a blander flavor, and is extremely dry when just fried in a patty. Thus, it got very low marks from the cook and groan: from the family.

How can we overcome an instant bias against a good quality product when it is introduced into the market? New or different products are often low cost and can have some pluses as far as nutritional value is concerned.

When you try something new to you that you hope will save you money, you need to give it a chance. Look for some recipes that use that product or adapt the recipe for a similar product, but try to decide how this new product is different. Then when you fix something and it doesn't meet expectations, analyze what would make it better.

In the case of ground turkey, you need to consider its low fat content. This makes it a good buy nutritionally, but it can be dry and tasteless. If you prepare it with these traits in mind, you add seasoning and moisture. Don't just try it once and give it up.

Preparing food for the family can be a very creative process. What's creativity? It's putting something of yourself into a task. You can invent something new, discover a new combination or unique way of putting things together. You can explore new recipes or ingredients.

The creative process starts with the desire to try something new. You may want to solve a problem—"How can I use up those leftovers?" or you may be curious about the taste of some new food. You may have less money to spend on food so you're challenged to try less expensive foods or recipes that use a small amount of meat and larger amounts of less expensive items.

Whatever the reason, creativity starts with wanting to explore something new. To be a creative cook, you need to gather lots of information. Cookbooks, magazine articles, newspaper food sections, a knowledge of spices and herbs, understanding of nutritional needs and exploring the foods of other cultures all give 'food for thought' in the creative process. But having information is really only a beginning. You need to try new patterns. Become brave enough to trust yourself to add or change something in a recipe.

Often we have been taught to judge each idea as it comes along, deciding that one failure proves that the whole project or idea is wrong. When we do this we tend to limit the number of new things we'll try.

Sometimes you need to enlist the help of the family to be willing to try some of these new foods and recipes. Encouraging them to have an open mind can help you as the chief provider of the meals.

My family felt that having an 'Eccy' (their term for a home economist) for a mother was a mixed blessing. They had to admit that it made for an interesting life, though, since there were as many super successes as there were failures.

If your food budget is becoming a greater and greater challenge, arm yourself with lots of information and then do some exploring. Try some new products, some lower cost recipes, and put your creativity to work.

Here are a couple of recipes for ground turkey. This inexpensive product can be found in the freezer or fresh meat sections of most grocery stores, usually with other turkey products.

TURKEY MEAT BALLS
2 eggs, slightly beaten

1/2 cup milk
4 slices bread
1 pound ground turkey
3 cups medium white sauce or 1 can cream soup combined with 1 can of milk
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon poultry seasoning or sage
2 teaspoons baking powder

bread for 10 minutes in this mixture. Add turkey, seasonings and baking powder. Mix well. Mixture will be soft. Drop spoonfuls into a small amount of cooking oil. Brown and drain. Place meatballs in casserole dish and add white sauce or canned soup mixture. Bake uncovered at 325°F. for 1 hour.

ORIENTAL TURKEY LOAF

Combine eggs and milk. Soak 1 pound ground turkey

1 beaten egg
2 tablespoons minced onion
1 teaspoon Soy Sauce
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
4 oz. crushed pineapple or applesauce
1/2 can (5 oz. can) diced water chestnuts, optional

Mix ingredients well. Place in greased pan. Bake at 375°F. about 30 minutes. Top will be pale.

STEAK AU FROMAGE

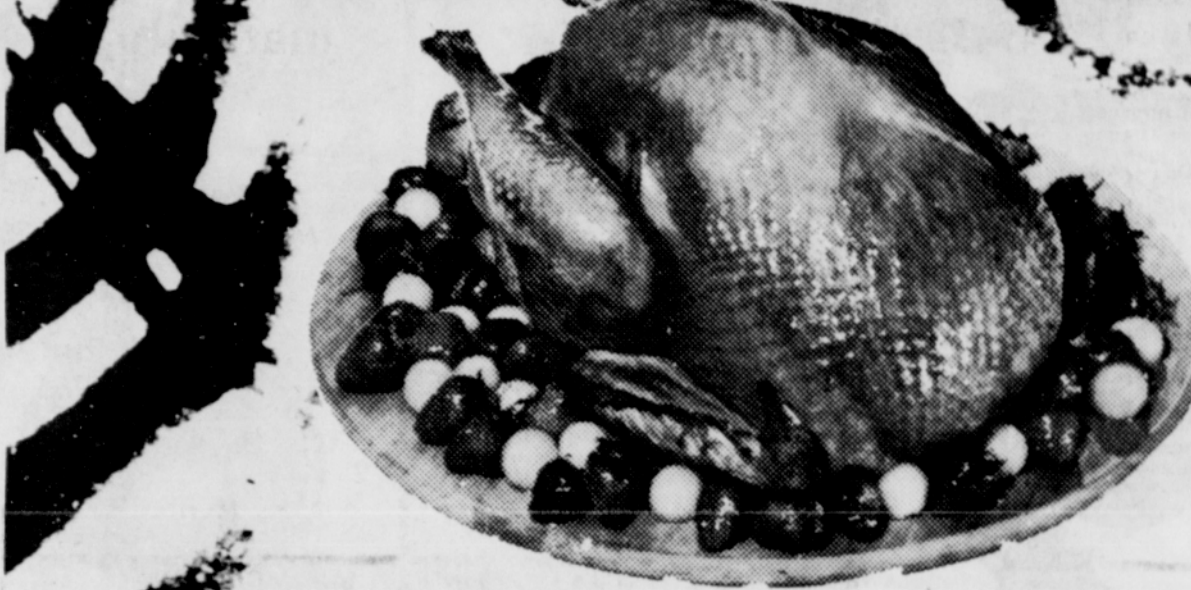
(Makes about 6 servings)

6 slices hard French cheese, such as Cantal, Gruyère (Beaufort, Comté, Emmental), 5x3x1/2 inch thick
1 egg, well beaten
Flour
2 cups French biscotte crumbs
1/4 cup butter
1/4 cup oil



Dip slices of cheese, first into egg, then into flour, then into egg and then into crumbs. Press crumbs firmly to make them adhere. Place cheese on wax paper and let stand for 30 minutes to dry. In large skillet, heat butter and oil until sizzling. Add cheese slices and brown over moderate heat until crusty on both sides. Serve hot sprinkled with chopped chives and cornichons.

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