

Outside Factors Don't Have to Take the Thanks out of Thanksgiving



It won't come as a surprise that Thanksgiving dinner may require some adjustments this year. In addition to the inflation factor, many Utah turkey farms have been hit by avian influenza – especially those in Sanpete County. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a count taken last month found the virus was responsible for farmers putting down approximately 700,000 birds to avoid spreading it to neighboring farms. That's roughly 23% of turkeys raised annually throughout the state.

Some grocery stores around the state may use turkeys as a “loss leader pricing” product this year, a marketing strategy that prices products lower than the cost to produce them in order to attract new customers or sell additional products. But since not all stores will do this, families may need to substitute another source of protein,

purchase a smaller bird, or share the cost with family members and guests as they gather to feast.

Consider these tips to make Thanksgiving a time to give thanks despite rising costs and fewer turkeys.

* Consider having a simpler meal and involve the family in menu planning. Perhaps cranberry sauce isn't as necessary as you thought. Maybe only a few people enjoy stuffing, but potatoes and gravy are on everyone's list. Also, if there are so many menu options they won't all fit on a single plate, consider eliminating some of the less popular foods. In addition, consider what menu items can be made from scratch rather than purchasing them from the store.

* Shop smart. Before shopping, take inventory of what you have in the pantry. Watch for coupons in the mail or online. Coupon savings can add up quickly when used purposefully for foods you normally use. (However, they won't save you money if you purchase foods you likely won't use just because you have a coupon!) Remember to have a snack or meal before shopping, and leave behind lovable distractions such as small children or impulsive spouses.

* Remember traditions. What are the most time-honored things you do that bind generations together in your family? If everyone enjoys taking a turn expressing what they are grateful for because that's what grandpa always did, keep the tradition alive. Also, don't be afraid to try new activities or events that could become traditions.

* Keep conversations positive and upbeat. Be deliberate in staying away from potentially volatile topics, such as politics.

* Reach out to others. Thanksgiving is a great time to serve others who may not have connections to family and friends. Consider calling, visiting or inviting someone to dinner who may be alone. Or take a pie or treat to someone who

is homebound.

While Thanksgiving dinner may give way to a less traditional feast this year due to tighter budgets and fewer turkeys for sale, there is still plenty to celebrate and be grateful for as we kick off the holiday season.