

- [home](#)
- [music & nightlife](#)
- [movies](#)
- [the arts](#)
- **restaurants**
 - SONOMA / NAPA / MARIN
 - Find a restaurant
 - Cotati
 - Fairfax
 - Healdsburg
 - Mill Valley
 - Napa
 - Petaluma
 - San Anselmo
 - San Rafael
 - Santa Rosa
 - Sebastopol
 - Sonoma
 - more restaurants
- [SILICON VALLEY](#)
- [SANTA CRUZ](#)
- [classifieds](#)
- [columns](#)
- [news & features](#)
- [the papers](#)
- [blogs](#)
-
- [coupons](#)
- [advertise](#)
- [about us](#)
- [contact](#)

We can help you with your green home improvement project

LOOK FOR OUR GREENER CHOICE SYMBOL ON HUNDREDS OF ITEMS IN OUR STORES




Every step counts— we're trying to do our part

Santa Rosa • Sonoma • Ukiah

restaurants North Bay

11.07.07

[home](#) | [north bay bohemian index](#) | [sonoma_napa_marin_county_restaurants](#) | [review](#)

Heritage for the Holidays

What's the best way to save heritage breed birds? Eat them!

By Clark Wolf



Splitting his time between Guerneville and Manhattan, acclaimed consultant Clark Wolf graces these pages with the occasional diatribe from the periodic local.

It's hard to believe and kind of a giggle to learn that Laura Chenel, our local and national queen of all things goat cheese, once worked at her parent's Sebastopol eatery, Gobbler's Roosterant. They had a farm where they raised the all-American bird, so naturally a cafe followed. Truth is, the North Bay has for years been Turkey Central.

In certain circles, Petaluma has long been known as "the birth place of bird propagation," in no small part due to the efforts of one George Nicholas who turned a "mutant" (genetic accident) single white turkey into a broad-breasted juggernaut. This post-'50s embrace of all things technical was built on a long, solid history of chicken and egg production (about which there is no question of order). Even more than Colorado has been known for lamb, the North Bay region has long been lousy with birds. Squab, quail, duck, even geese have all been waddling toward our dinner tables from in and all around what the Miwok Indians referred to as "flat back hills" (*pe'ta*: "flat"; *lu'ma*: "back"), those lovely soft rises in the open valley.

As words like "heritage," "artisan" and "heirloom" have become more popular over the last few years, so too have birds with meat of deeper flavor and hue. Me, I'm a dark-meat boy from way back, so the transition to what is now more commonly called a "heritage" turkey has been easy and pleasant. More flavor than that dry, nasty white blob of butterball seems like the way to go. (If it's plastic and it pops out of my food, then it's simply not my food.) That said, I have fond college-day memories of Turkey Wing Thursdays at Berkeley's Brennan's Cafeteria, when not much money would get you a whole lot of chew and a side of messy mashed potatoes and gravy.

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting Santa Rosa's Shone Farm to join in a Slow Food event supporting a local 4-H project raising heritage turkey breeds for holiday slaughter. Our meal was delicious and dear, the farm was beautiful and the 4-H-ers looked surprisingly like skateboarders in farm drag. All worlds happily met to do good and eat well.

It got me thinking about how innovation and advancement can come full circle. Here we were near the home of modern, mass and mediocre bird "production" (such a cold, distancing term), gathering with fresh-faced youths working to restore traditional husbandry to provide for classic American meals long associated with family celebration.

In one of the historical references I recently perused, the excited ad language for the newly mass-produced turkey went something like, "and made formerly expensive birds, once only reserved for special occasions, available every day at low, low prices!"

As a first-generation immigrant well on my way to weeping at a good tissue commercial, nearly every meal is a serious celebration for me. In fact, in many cultures and countless religious permutations, the blessing at mealtime, while often vestigial or rote, really does have meaning. Every meal truly is a gift. Food ought to be of gift and celebration-caliber, in some way, as often as possible. That's a huge part of what people the world over still comfortably think of as the American dream. Anyway, it's the one I dream.

Thanksgiving harvest time has always been an opportunity to appreciate the bounty new generations are just now beginning to realize might easily slip away. Getting back to basics—a turkey that can actually run around, hunt and peck, make a little whoopee and sow some new chicks—seems a particularly fitting piece of the puzzle.

Believe me, I have no trouble with the notion of free-spirited innovation, especially where it can help bring good, nourishing food to more folks everywhere. But when the end result rushes headlong toward a water-and-chemicals-pumped turkey "roll," I'm delighted to see food and fashion swing another way.

Stewardship of our Eden, marshalling of our creative forces and individual talents requires a thoughtful balance between independent thinking and community good. Nowhere is this more

restaurant guide [View All](#)

- [FIND A SONOMA | MARIN | NAPA RESTAURANT](#)
- [FIND A RESTAURANT REVIEW](#)
- [SEARCH AVAILABLE RESERVATIONS & BOOK A TABLE](#)

columns [View All](#)

First Bite

Quick dining snapshots by Bohemian staffers.

[Wine Tasting Room of the Week](#)

Winery news and reviews.

[News of the Food](#)

Food-related comings and goings, openings and closings, and other essays for those who love the kitchen and what it produces.

[Real-Life Kitchen](#)

Recipes for food that you can actually make.

obvious or critical than with food; it's why GMOs are such a hot topic. It may be fine to fiddle with your own peaches, but not if it leads to cross-pollination that wafts across the fence and forever changes your neighbor's fruit. Sometimes what's called being independent is just a cover for good old-fashioned selfishness. There, I've said it.

So this holiday season, bust the bank and sport for a heritage bird or two. Support a trajectory that, like our beloved tomato, probably originated in what is now Mexico and Central America, went to Europe with the Spanish explorers, then came back via our East Coast settlers (yes, those nattily dressed Pilgrims most likely had turkeys on board) to become what Benjamin Franklin wanted to declare our national bird.

Chow down on a Bourbon Red, Narragansett, a juicy Slate, Standard Bronze, Jersey Buff or Black Spanish, if you can get your hands on one. Order early and pay a premium. Consider it an investment in our future while we celebrate our past.

Clark Wolf is the president of the Clark Wolf Company, specializing in food, restaurant and hospitality consulting.

The Slow Food Russian River chapter facilitates heritage turkey sales this holiday at \$7.50 a pound; pickup is in Petaluma. For details, go to www.slowfoodrr.org or call 707.480.0379 or 707.526.2922. Liz Cunninghame of Clark Summit Farm out in Tomales also sells heritage turkeys, but at press time, she'd been sold-out for three full months. To get on next year's list, write to her at clarksummitfarm@aol.com. Also, Mollie Stone's markets often carry Mary's Heritage Turkeys, animals raised free-range in Fresno. Two locations in the North Bay: 100 Harbor Drive, Sausalito; 415.331.6900; and 270 Bon Air Shopping Center, Greenbrae; 415.461.1164.

[Send a letter](#) to the editor about this story.

 [SAVE THIS](#)  [EMAIL THIS](#)  [PRINT THIS](#)  [MOST POPULAR](#)  [RSS FEEDS](#)