

A Kentish Christmas

Your guide to shopping, what's on and where to visit in Kent



WELFARE FIRST: Andrew (left) and Clive Wreathall with some of the turkeys reared by Appledore Turkeys on Priory Farm

Beautiful birds

CHRISTMAS has come early for the turkeys lucky enough to be reared on Priory Farm in Appledore.

Appledore Turkeys adopt an old-fashioned approach to farming with an emphasis on the well being of the birds, using methods which have been passed down three generations. The family business produces 20,000 turkeys a year and supplies retailers across London, the South East and even further afield. But the focus is firmly on good value and traditional farming, which they say results in better tasting turkeys for their customers.

Clive Wreathall, 46, has been working on the farm alongside his brother Andrew for his entire adult life. Their grandfather, Frank Wreathall, started rearing a few turkeys on his Suffolk farm years ago – an enterprise which grew to become the hugely successful Appledore Turkeys, which is now based on a 900-hectare-plus plot on the Romney Marsh.

“The way we try to work is as near as possible to the way my grandfather did it,” Clive said. “We have small, slow-grow birds who have a very much longer and

By **JANE CONNOLLY**

fuller life (than turkeys on other farms). They are very old when they get to Christmas and are not reared with any sort of growth product.

“They are all reared, plucked and made oven-ready on the farm, so there is no animal transportation at all.

“Appledore Turkeys is a real family business, it’s like the Waltons down here.”

The company farms both free range and barn-reared turkeys, feeding them on a diet of mostly cereal. Mr Wreathall is very proud of the conditions in which the birds live and the quality of their lives on the farm.

“The barn is a World War Two Lancaster Bomber hangar, which has natural light and ventilation,” he said. “I’m quite happy for people to look at it. It’s a million miles away from what you would call a factory farm. People can look in at the white turkeys from the road and see right through. Our turkeys are aged 26 weeks by Christmas, whereas other companies would start killing them at eight weeks

old. In effect we’ve got the slow-driving car – the Bentley, if you will – while other companies would be the Ferrari. We still get to the same place.”

Ethically reared turkeys tend to be more expensive than mass-produced varieties and many families are already facing a tough Christmas this year, thanks to the credit crunch and its repercussions. But business is brisk and Mr Wreathall is still facing a strong demand for his high quality turkeys.

“The reason is that there are still people out there, and we feel it’s a growing market, who want to know where their food comes from,” he said. “They want unadulterated, simple food that they can trust and they know they can get hold of the people who produce it. They’re not looking at price, but value. We are completely traditional so it’s just 100 per cent turkey, no water or butter. It’s worlds away from what you can get in the supermarket.”

Turkeys can be ordered directly from Appledore Turkeys on 01233 758609 or online at www.appledoreturkeys.co.uk. Alternatively, a full list of retailers can be found on the website.

Buy British

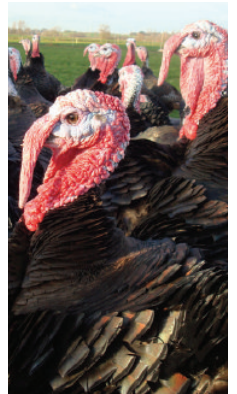
CONSUMERS are being encouraged to buy British turkeys this Christmas in a seasonal song from the National Farmers’ Union.

The popular carol The Twelve Days of Christmas has been given a festive makeover and now sings the praises of buying British, buying local and buying the best you can afford. There is also lots of advice, tips and bird-themed fun to be found at www.ukturkeys.co.uk.

Find out how to cook the perfect turkey for your Christmas dinner and discover some great ideas for using up the leftovers. Visitors to the website can also download three ‘gobble gobble’ ringtones, play a game and enter a competition to win a farm-fresh Bronze turkey from Kelly’s Turkeys.

Perhaps most importantly of all, there is also a list of turkey producers across the UK, enabling shoppers to order their bird online.

Visit www.ukturkeys.co.uk for more information about vendors.



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