
VALLEY BITES

BY PAMELA HAMILTON

It's time to talk turkey. I know, Thanksgiving is probably the last thing you want to think about when the weather is still 90 degrees plus, but you really should order a heritage turkey for the big celebration now while they are still available.

Rescued from the brink of extinction, heritage breeds such as the Bourbon Red and American Bronze are making a comeback. Cooking one of these birds last Thanksgiving made me wonder why generic, mass-produced, shrink-wrapped, giant-breasted, water-injected turkey had ever been a staple of my holiday dinner table. The free-range turkey actually had enough flavor that I could skip my usual brining routine. (Look for my heritage turkey cooking tips in our next issue.)

Chef Chrysa Kaufman of **Rancho Pinot Grill** (6208 N. Scottsdale Rd., Scottsdale) has made special arrangements for a bulk turkey purchase from Heritage Foods USA this year. See the box for ordering information. (Follow the directions: *Don't call the restaurant*, and don't delay—the deadline is October 15.)

When I sink my teeth into dates like those on our cover, I close my eyes and picture miles of sand surrounding a shady oasis populated with swaying palms and camels. Well, maybe that's not quite what Arizona's date farms look like but I can still dream, can't I? You'll find local medjool dates for the chorizo-stuffed date recipe (see "Cooking Fresh" in this issue) at **Sphinx Date Ranch** (3039 N Scottsdale Rd., Scottsdale) and from **McClendon Select** (certified organic dates at the Town and Country Farmers' Market starting in October). For a special treat seek out **Art's Dates**, available only a few weekends in September at the **Downtown Phoenix Public Market** (Central and McKinley on Saturday morning). Art Coffey harvests five types of date trees and offers a selection of the more unusual varieties.

Longtime Valley residents tell me they used to visit Graham's Fruit Stand at 40th Street and Camelback for a refreshing date shake. Today you'll have to stop at **Dateland**

on the way to Yuma (Interstate 8, milepost 67; www.dateland.com) to satisfy your cravings. Or order their World Famous Date Shake mix and whip up a batch at home.

TURKEY TALK

Fresh American Bronze turkeys for \$6 per pound, plus tax. Turkeys must be ordered by October 15 and payment secured by credit card. Final payment may be made at pickup by cash, check or credit card. No cancellations or refunds. Pickup will be on Monday, Nov. 20, and Tuesday, Nov. 21, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. at Rancho Pinot Grill. To place your order, e-mail Chrysa Kaufman at chrysalucia@msn.com (preferable) or call her at (602) 740-7101. Specify the size turkey you need when you place your order (8-10 lbs., 10-12 lbs., all of the way up to 22+ lbs.).



Local food critics have been raving about newcomer **Circa 1900 Restaurant** (528 E. Adams St., Phoenix). I finally managed a visit and thoroughly enjoyed its seasonal, often local cuisine. The generous portion of bone-free skate (an underappreciated fish) was especially toothsome. I'll be back for lunch very, very soon.

Lest you think it's only fine restaurants such as Circa 1900 that can afford to serve high-quality local food, I'd like to direct your attention to **Bon Appétit** food service management company (www.bamco.com). They provide cafeteria service for two Valley high-tech companies and make a point of incorporating local ingredients into their menus. On October 3, Bon Appétit chefs will go one step further by competing in a company-wide Eat Local Challenge. The lunch they serve that day will consist solely of food raised or grown within 150 miles of Phoenix. (For last year's challenge, their fellow chefs in Portland, Oregon, even produced their own salt by dehydrating seawater!) This year's menu is still under construction, but is likely to feature Queen Creek Olive Oil, Power Ranch beef and Desert Sweet shrimp.

The other day, I stopped by **Kitchen Classics** (4041 E. Thomas Rd., Phoenix) and discovered a perfect opportunity for us foodies to do a good deed. The cookware store has gotten together with PREHAB of Arizona to sponsor Project Starting Over. The project will stock kitchens in 30 shelters to help families in need to get a new start. They're looking for your gently used kitchen equipment and can even fix appliances that have gone on the fritz. In exchange you'll receive a \$10 to \$50 trade-in credit at Kitchen Classics. Maybe it's time to replace my '80s almond-colored Cuisinart food processor with one of those shiny new stainless steel models . . .