

Holiday Turkeys

The Signal Mountain Lion's Club is well known for its contributions to holiday festivities on Signal Mountain, and the summer bar-B-Ques and picnics have been a staple ingredient of the Fourth of July and Labor Day tradition for many years. It is less well-known for the resourcefulness of it's members.

Three years ago, the Lions added a third holiday cook-out to our repertoire, cooking uncountable Hamburgers and Hot Dogs to support the McCoy Farm Memorial day celebration. As many as 20 Lions work at this celebration, operating a cold drink wagon and feeding as many patrons as long as the food will hold out.



Meanwhile, our Bar-B-Q pit, originally built several decades ago at Althaus Park, was reaching the end of its useful life. We were faced with a serious dilemma. Either rebuild the pits, which

was a labor intensive process, or find a different method for preparing smoked meats.



Our choice was to purchase a mobile "smoker", similar to the smokers you see at several local Bar-B-Q establishments. The cost was about the same, and our new smoker is mobile, which lets us move our efforts to a variety of locations. A major advantage of the smoker is staffing; its rotisserie is motor driven, with a combination of gas-fired, wood-burning heat which can produce either a traditional roasted or smoked product.

Fast forward to two years ago, when we started preselling, smoking and cooking Thanksgiving and Christmas turkey Breasts. Each Saturday in the month before the holiday, we take orders and then prepare nearly one hundred Turkey breasts the day before

each holiday. As with many of our service projects, it is both a fund-raising activity and one that brings the community in closer contact with each other.

In our first two years of operation we prepared and distributed almost 200 smoked or Roasted Turkey Breasts each season, and the 2018 Thanksgiving production line was set up to crank out enough birds to satisfy the orders placed for the 2018 Thanksgiving holiday.

And then Murphy's Law took over. The day started early in the dark and cold on Wednesday morning, November 21st. with some real challenges. The roaster wouldn't fire up! Ralph Mann, the chief cook, took it in for quick repair (finding someone to repair the ignition system at that time of the morning was no small accomplishment). Onward and upward, right?

Then, after loading the smoker with 72 birds, the drive motor for the rotator seized up and would not move. After removing the motor and inspecting it, the bad news was clear; it could not be repaired. Nor could it be replaced in a timely manner. Now what? We were in a bind! Should we call our 60+ customers and tell them the day before Thanksgiving that we couldn't prepare their turkey?

Never fear, Lions are nothing if not creative. Through the hard work and innovative efforts of Lions **Ralph Mann** (logistics), **Tom Blewett** (Chef), **Pete Gammon** (Maintenance), **Bruce Bishop and Chris Cole** (Labor), nearly 80 Turkey breasts were roasted / smoked for Signal Mountain families.

The Chef did not panic. He coordinated his crew to rotate the racks in the cooker by hand! Every 10 minutes for the ensuing six hours the labor force, hand-rotated the racks. The smoker was not exactly designed for hand operation, but it worked. And then they were done.

Ultimately we turned out some great roasted and smoked turkey breasts and our quick samples indicated they were pretty tasty. The Lion's club demonstrated one more time, we serve!



In most recent years we cook the whole bird. And it is the best roasted turkey on the mountain.