



## Goodbye, Turkeys

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*Cherie Langlois*

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

Photo by Cherie Langlois I miss my turkeys.

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When we acquired our first Bourbon Reds this year, I didn't expect to become hopelessly attached to these birds. Like the broiler chickens we've raised, they were destined for the dinner table, so I knew better than to name them or treat them like pets, of which we already had plenty.

And I didn't—name them, that is. But from the start our turkeys' personable, inquisitive natures made it impossible for me—an animal-lover and former vegetarian zookeeper—to NOT treat them like pets. Or more like feathered children.

I loved letting our fun little flock out of their pen each morning. They would surround me making cute “boop, boop” sounds, and tag along after me wherever I went. They were thrilled when I hand-fed them treats of bread and dandelion leaves (the latter grew in their pasture, but they went nuts when I picked the leaves for them).

Photo by Cherie Langlois After I left, they trotted off to do turkey things: hunt bugs, sun-bathe, preen on their perches, patrol the fenceline. As he matured, the bigger of the toms strutted and fanned his tail-feathers for his hen harem, gobbling his heart out whenever he heard the dogs bark or a car pull up.

Throughout the day, I'd glance out my office window to see our beautiful turkeys, their cinnamon feathers flaming against the green grass. They always looked happy, which is exactly what I wanted, and the main reason we were raising our own turkeys to dine on this holiday season (and beyond) instead of buying those poor factory-farmed birds.

But it wasn't easy saying sorry and goodbye, even if we didn't have to “process” the turkeys ourselves, thank goodness. We're still debating whether to do this again next year.

Right now, I can't help thinking how much easier and cheaper it would be to just snap up an anonymous, on-sale, supermarket monster-turkey, if only I could switch off my conscience.

But then I wonder, maybe our food shouldn't come as easily and cheaply as that—especially when it was once a living, feeling creature.

And next year, maybe, I could keep a pretty turkey pair as breeders so I wouldn't have to say sad goodbyes to all of my feathered friends.

Or, I could always go back to being a vegetarian.

What do you think? (and Happy Thanksgiving!)

~Cherie



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