By Nancy Whitaker

TALKING ON THE TURKEY HOTLINE?

By the time this column prints, Thanksgiving will be over and you will have cooked your turkey. For some cooks it has become a tradition to fix the big bird and present it with all the trimmings. For others, cooking a turkey can be not only a new experience, but a challenging one.

I have prepared a Thanksgiving turkey for many years, but that does not mean I have never had any bad experiences. The first time for roasting a turkey can scare any novice cook especially if you have never attempted to cook one.

Most of us have encountered the age old problem of leaving the neck or gizzard bag inside the bird. This really doesn't hurt anything, but can be embarrassing when someone carves the beautiful meat at the Thanksgiving Day feast. (oops)

Although I have never called one, there are several turkey hotlines that an inexperienced cook, or anyone, can call and get answers to their bird cooking tragedies.

In fact, it is interesting to read about questions the Butterball Turkey hotline gets asked every year. The turkey hotline has been in the business of answering turkey questions since 1981 and the type of questions they field never fails to amaze them. One age old legend is sometimes taken for an authentic recipe. People call each year and ask the turkey hotline operators, "Can I put popcorn in my turkey's cavity?"

Apparently when doing this you will know the fowl is done when the corn finishes popping and blows the tail off. (This does seem like a good idea.)

Another question asked was, “Can I thaw my turkey out in the bath tub while my child is taking a bath?”

Well, my answer to that one would be, “Are you going to wash the turkey, too? If so, look out for the soap. It could ruin the taste of the turkey.”

Another question was from a lady in Kentucky in 1993. Her little chihuahua had somehow crawled into the cavity of her turkey and could not get back out. Apparently the cavity was big enough for the dog to get into, but not big enough for it to get out. She told the hotline she had tried pulling out the pooch and shaking the bird, but could not get the poor canine out.

The hotline operator told her to cut the opening in the turkey bigger. It worked and the little dog was freed. Butterball has also fielded calls from owners of gerbils and housecats.

Other questions asked were: “Can you thaw a frozen turkey using an electric hair dryer or wrapping it in an electric blanket?”

“Can I brine my turkey in the washing machine?” “The family dog bit off a big piece of the turkey. Can the rest of it be saved? “

Now here is a great question asked of the turkey hotline: “The turkey in my freezer is 23 years old. Is it safe to eat?”

The caller was advised that the bird was safe to eat, but that it probably wouldn’t taste very good. “That’s what we thought,” the caller told the Talk-line. “We’ll give it to the church.”

Now we think we get asked questions here on a daily basis, but the employees on the turkey hotline really get a treat just getting asked some of these questions.

Did you cook a turkey for Thanksgiving? Have you got any funny experiences cooking your holiday bird? Would you like to work for the Butterball Turkey Hotline? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.