

# TURKEY TAKES OFF

## Continuous cutter enhances product development

**I**ncreasing numbers of people searching for a healthful food have found one in turkey, and Gobbler's Retreat, a Columbia City, IN further processor, is profiting from that.

"We are expanding quite rapidly because of the popularity of turkey meat, and the health-conscious public in America," says Ralph Heine, the firm's owner. About 60% of the firm's production is cut-up and boned for further-processed products, and 40% goes out fresh-dressed, especially during the holidays.

Among the turkey products turned out at Gobbler's Retreat are rolls, raw breasts and steaks, cooked breasts, smoked turkey ham, smoked breasts, smoked turkey pastрами, and cooked turkey bologna, salami, and luncheon meats. The company processes more than 650,000 turkeys per year, and raises 60,000 birds on its 160-acre farm.

### PROCESSING

One of the secrets of Heine's success is his ability to profitably utilize every part of the bird designated for further processing. Heine uses a Comitrol processor, by Urschel Laboratories, to effectively emulsify turkey skin, which is added back to cooked white and dark

rolls, sausage, and boiled turkey hams. The skin acts as a natural binder when added back to the turkey meat in natural proportions.

"We started with a smaller Urschel unit 15 years ago, but as production increased, we bought a Model 1700," explains Heine. "This unit has increased our production capabilities and given us the versatility to produce new items."

Heine has plans for new turkey products including patties, nuggets, white meat patties, turkey fritters, and cooked

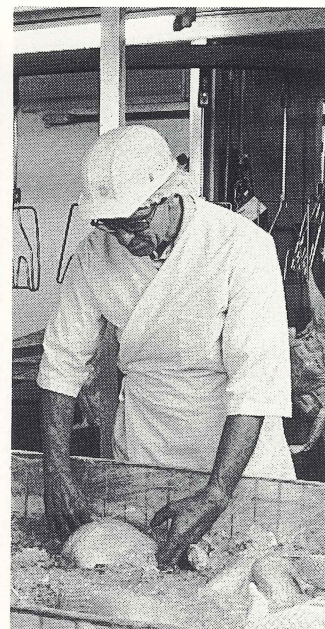
turkey drumsticks. He says, "We also use the same unit to reduce skinless thighs for boiled ham, scapula meat for cooked white rolls, and dark meat for cooked dark rolls."

The firm sells "Gobbler's Retreat" and "Heine's Pride" product lines to retail outlets through distributors in a tri-state area including Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. It also operates a retail outlet on the farm, which carries a full line of turkey products. □

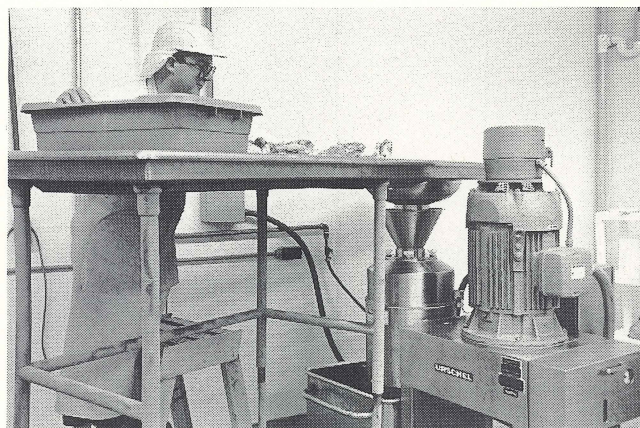
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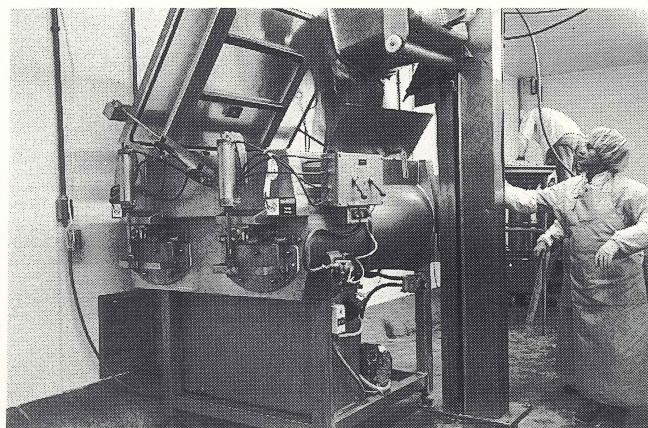
**Top:** The firm raises 60,000 birds a year, and **bottom,** operates a retail deli on the farm.



**Owner Ralph Heine checks chilled, dressed turkeys.**



**Raw material is fed into the emulsifier.**



**Emulsified skin is dumped into a mixer/massager.**