

Huntley Turkey Testicle Festival draws people for unique eat

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[HUNTLEY](#) – The 35th annual festival celebrated Wednesday in Huntley served up a part of the turkey that isn't normally served at Thanksgiving dinner – testicles.

More than 1,200 pounds of testicles were served for the festival that was expected to bring in 5,000 people throughout the day, said J.R. Westberg, who co-owns Parkside Pub in Huntley, where McHenry County's first pre-Thanksgiving Turkey Testicle Festival began.

Tony and Alicia Fritz came from Barrington Hills for the fifth year in a row because it's "something you just have to experience," Alicia said.

"You can eat some turkey testicles, and you can't get that at any restaurants. We come and get a thing of the turkey balls, and I don't really like them, but you have to try them," Tony said, adding that the testicles have the consistency of mushrooms but the flavor of liver.

People from all over the U.S. and even the world come to the festival, with people from 37 states and four countries in attendance last year, Westberg said.

"One woman flew in from Alaska just to see Seventh Heaven perform," Westberg said.

Huntley resident Chuck Veach has been helping sell merchandise and set up the festival for the past 27 years.

"It becomes a family gathering before the big day," Veach said. "People come in groups and see people they haven't seen since maybe they were here last year. They come in just to see who they are going to see."

This year, people flocked from Minnesota, Kansas City and Florida, among other locations, Veach said.

"I hope it keeps up for the town itself," Veach said. "It's the biggest attraction in Huntley all year-round, and the No. 1 thing to do in Huntley."

Dawning a turkey hat, Michelle Cahue of Chicago said she returns each year with her

friends as a reunion.

“I’ve tried the testicles a few times before, but it’s just not my thing,” Cahue said.

Westberg said the event has become multigenerational, with one person returning for their 33rd festival. He said he has begun seeing parents come with their children once they turn 21, passing from generation to generation.

Metal detector wands were added to the festival this year in order to keep the event safe, Westberg said.

The festival, which ran from 11 a.m. to midnight, supported multiple charities, including Opening Doors with Teagan, Ronald McDonald House Charities and Make-A-Wish Foundation, as well as local youth athletic programs.

Along with Huntley’s Parkside Pub, Clasen’s Tavern in Union hosted a festival, and an inaugural Benton Street Turkey Ball Bash on the Woodstock Square also began this year, hosted by Benton Street Festivals and Main Street PourHouse.

Jim Hennig originally started the festival at Parkside before buying Clasen’s in Union and hosting his own festival there for the past five years.