Once upon a time, possibly at a lodge in Wyoming, possibly at a butcher shop in Maurice, La., or maybe even at a plantation in South Carolina, an enterprising cook decided to take a boned chicken, a boned duck and a boned turkey, stuff them one inside the other like Russian dolls, and roast them. He called his masterpiece turducken.

In the years that followed its mysterious birth, turducken has become something of a Southern specialty, a holiday feast with a beguiling allure. There are some Cajun butchers, like Hebert's Specialty Meats, who have made it their signature, stuffing dozens of turduckens each week, and shipping them frozen around the nation. At Thanksgiving time, Hebert's production leaps to nearly 5,000 a week.

"I think it's like the deep-fried turkey that came to the fore a few years back," said John T. Edge, the director of the Southern Foodways Alliance in Oxford, Miss. "It's a fairly exotic meal that has gone mainstream."

"When I visited my father in Macon, Ga.," Mr. Edge added, "he had a turducken that he bought cut rate from Sam's Club in his freezer."

But since many people don't seem to mind dunking an entire turkey in boiling oil, it doesn't seem so ambitious to try stuffing a duck stuffed with a chicken into a turkey, rather than buying it prepared. It seemed straightforward from a cook's point of view, and the results were tantalizing.

A well-prepared turducken is a marvelous treat, a free-form poultry scrum layered with flavorful stuffing and moistened with duck fat. When it's assembled, it looks like a turkey and it roasts like a turkey, but when you go to carve it, you can slice through it like a loaf of bread. In each slice you get a little

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Turkey Finds Its Inner Duck
(And Chicken)

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The centerpiece of the dish, the duck, is one of the last to be added to the recipe. The process begins with a small bit of apple being stuffed into the duck's cavity, followed by the addition of a small piece of butter. The duck is then placed in a roasting pan, and the pan is placed in a hot oven for about 30 minutes. After this time, the duck is removed from the oven and allowed to rest for about 10 minutes. During this time, the duck is basted with a mixture of melted butter, Dijon mustard, and soy sauce. Once the duck is done, it is placed on a cutting board and allowed to cool before being carved. The meat is then added to the turducken, along with the chicken and turkey, to create the final dish.

Butchers in New York Who Will Bone the Birds

**HOLLAND COURT MEAT & FISH MARKET**
1423 Lexington Avenue (3rd Street); (212) 689-5565. Bone all of the birds and prepare three 4-hour stuffing packs. Order one week in advance.

**OPPENHEIMER PRIME MEATS**
2808 Broadway (8th Street); (212) 587-1322. Bone all of the birds and prepare three 4-hour stuffing packs. Order one week in advance.

**FAIRWAY 2172**
3200 Broadway (74th Street); (212) 234-3883. The butchers will bone the poultry at the meat counter, fresh. 4-pound stuffing on duck. Order 5 days in advance.

**LOTUS PRIME MEATS**
1081 Madison Avenue (82nd Street); (212) 777-1771 or 800-556-2373. Order at least two days in advance.

**PITAGORA'S MEATS**
666 Eighth Avenue (49th Street); (212) 332-0188. Bone all of the birds. Order 5 days in advance.

**MADDEN'S**
666 Sixth Avenue (49th Street); (212) 332-0188. Bone all of the birds. Order 5 days in advance.

**JEFFERSON MARKET**
406 Sixth Avenue (11th Street); (212) 333-3377. Bone extra stuffing to order. 6 days' notice. 4-day stuffing order required, along with order for birds.

**ROBERT'S PRIME MEATS**
150 South Second Street (2nd Street); (212) 998-2465. Bone all of the birds. Order 5 days in advance.

**CITARELLA**
1606 Second Avenue (71st Street); (212) 398-3700. Bone all of the birds. Order 5 days in advance.

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