

SEE-THROUGH TURKEY

I'm going to talk a bit about where my Thanksgiving Dinner is coming from later today. But I was fascinated by this consideration of Turkey Dinner from Sunlight Foundation.

Turkey. What are the results of the latest federal safety inspection of the plant where your turkey met its end? The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) knows, but it's hard for ordinary consumers to get their hands on that information. While the agency posts results of bacterial sampling for different type of meat and poultry, it's not available in a format that consumers could use to compare brands or products.

Cranberry sauce. If you serve the canned kind (my husband always insists on it)—can you believe the claims on the label? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issues warning letters to companies that violate labeling laws for offenses such as false health claims (This oatmeal can cure memory loss!) or if it fails to list information about a chemical preservative. On the FDA's website, you can search them by company, date, download them, all good stuff. Except that last year the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) criticized the agency because it had neglected to post at least 220 warning letters and had also posted some duplicates. We don't know what the FDA doesn't tell us.

Stuffing. Was there ever a recall on the brand of stuffing mix you are thinking of buying? While you can sign up to receive alerts on recalls of contaminated products, whether meat (USDA) or not (FDA), there's no central searchable database where you can look up a particular brand name and research

any history of safety problems associated with it. After the scare last year involving salmonella poisoning, the FDA set up such a **database**; however, it's restricted to products containing peanut butter (and later one for pistachios). It's great to have that specific information, but while my five-year-old son thrives on a diet primarily based on peanut butter, most of us like to vary our diets.

It goes on to raise questions about pesticide and Ag subsidy transparency—click through to read the rest.

I noted last night that today is a good time to remember—and support—those food banks that help ensure that families that are struggling can enjoy a Thanksgiving Dinner, too.

It's also a good time to reflect on how big and scary our food system has become. (Indeed, the industrialization of our food system may contribute to the rising number of Americans who struggle to get enough food.)

Where did your turkey come from?