



The Poultry Palace Trained Chicken "Eggzibit"

JOSEPH PUISZIS
GEORGIA

My wife Tabatha and I have come up with a unique way to show the general public that chickens come in more varieties than just fried or baked with our traveling Trained Chicken "Eggzibit." It appears that ordinary people have little knowledge about these beautiful creatures. I've been asked "What is the difference between a chicken, a rooster, and a hen?" I've even overheard one parent tell their child, "That's not a bird, it's a chicken." The Poultry Palace brings these otherwise elusive animals up close to pet and learn about. Even veteran chicken owners are impressed with the friendliness of our chickens. They think it's neat that we have a rooster casually walking around letting them walk up and pet him.

Tabatha and I got the idea for the Poultry Palace Trained Chicken Eggzibit at the 2002 Wild Chicken Festival in Fitzgerald, Georgia. We had just started "collecting" chickens and thought we would meet other chicken people. The Chicken Festival was still in transition from being a Rattle Snake Round-Up and the wild chickens that normally live in the downtown area fled at the sight of thousands of people. There were no chickens anywhere except on the festival T-shirts. So we asked the Jaycees of Fitzgerald if we could bring our "pet" chickens for people to see next year. They agreed and on the way home we started planning how and what we were going to do.

Our original traveling coop was built from lawnmower crates mounted to our 8' x 5' utility trailer. Lawn and garden stores are an excellent source of free wood if you don't mind the hassle of removing a lot of very long staples. That first year our chickens traveled in dog carriers and vegetable crates in our truck and all the accessories were in the coop. This made for a long set up time; having to assemble the inner walls then disassemble them at the end of the day.



Tabatha and one of the featured chickens, Skeeter Muffin, pose by the "Eggzibit" set-up at the Possum Poke Festival in Poulan, Georgia.

The second year I attached two large doors on the sides of the coop and fans on top so the chickens could travel in the



Tabatha touring the 2006 Four Freedoms Festival in Madison, Florida with her buddy, Skeeter Muffin. Joe says they don't make money at the shows, but they enjoy informing attendees about poultry.

trailer. This was beneficial for everyone. Late comers and other vendors could see the chickens while we took down the rest of our booth, and the chickens were more comfortable. We get our power from two marine batteries and an inverter so the chickens stay cool the entire time they are in the coop.

Once we're set up the fun really starts. I bought 25 songs about chickens that we broadcast to set the mood and to provide background music for the nearly continuous crows from our roosters. The Poultry Palace is not a static display. The complete set-up is staffed by three knowledgeable people, my wife Tabatha, our friend Cherie, and myself. Nearly everyone who passes by stops to admire our birds. We readily open up each cage to let inquisitive adults and curious children pet our handsome birds as we answer questions and tell the history of each breed. Occasionally, when traffic at the coop allows, Tabatha will tour the festival grounds with Skeeter Muffin on her hat. She'll let him down near food vendors so he can dance for a snack. I always enjoy the admiration the spectators have for the beauty of our



Joseph shows his lawn-mower-crate traveling chicken coop.

chickens. I love to see the astonishment of the viewers when one of our roosters crow right in front of them.

To help with our expenses we've come up with another unique idea. "Get your picture taken with your favorite chicken!" Patrons can pose with any of the chickens we have on display while sitting on a bale of hay next to a few feed bags. My genius wife, Tabatha, modified several pairs of coveralls that slip over the their head so they can dress the part as well! The pictures aren't just "sit and shoot." We try to make the pictures fun and memorable with different poses. We have two digital cameras and printers so the wait for the high-quality 4" x 6" picture is less than five minutes. We also sell some chicken-related crafts, jewelry with real feathers, puppets, and Tabatha's "Chicken Strips." These are pen and ink drawings of "what a chicken might think if you said these terms to them." My favorite is *Chicken a la mode*.

There isn't much money in it. Small town festivals cannot pay for entertainment, and big festivals have not thus far. Some festivals still insist that we pay for our vendor space by way of a percentage of our gross sales. It doesn't seem fair, seeing as two thirds of our set-up is free entertainment. A lot of people have their own camera, or cell phone. We gladly let

them take pictures; but not in the "posing" area. We are hoping one day to be sought after enough that will we get paid to bring our Eggzibit to all functions. That way we could concentrate all our efforts on the entertainment and education part of the Eggzibit. I feel that we will always take pictures. It's part of the Eggzibit experience. Everybody who gets their picture taken really enjoys it; and a lot of them get one every year. Maintaining the Poultry Palace is costly and a great deal of hard work, but seeing the public laugh and stare with amazement is well worth it.

If you would like to contact us regarding bringing the traveling Trained Chicken Eggzibit to your event, call us at 229-431-0983 or e-mail joseph@poultrypalace.net.

Meet the chickens at our website: www.poultrypalace.net. You'll see more pictures and videos too!

Donations to support the traveling Trained Chicken Eggzibit can be sent to Joseph & Tabatha Puiszis Palace, 1209 Nelms Rd., Albany, GA 31705.—Ed.



Folks of all ages enjoy having photos taken with the Puiszis' birds. Here a group of ladies don hats and pose with Strawberry at the Albany Civic Center in Albany, Georgia, 2005.

Below: These young ladies have posed with one of the Puiszis' chickens four years in a row. Here they are with the Puiszis' 17-pound rooster, Snoball, at the 2005 Wild Chicken Festival in Fitzgerald, Georgia.



Poultry Predator Identification — The First Step To Deterrence

Backyard Poultry

Volume 2, Number 4
August, September, 2007

Dedicated to more and better small flock poultry

Raising a Critically Endangered Breed:

The Java Experience

Raising & Training Exhibition Poultry
Pg. 49

\$4.95 US • \$6.95 Canada

Designing Your Pasture Shelter
Pg. 22



Sgt Cluck, a white Leghorn rooster struts around the Eggzibit at the 2005 Wild Chicken Festival in Fitzgerald, Georgia.