Holiday Poultry Guide

Poultry is the collective term for domesticated birds bred for eating. (Pheasant, quail, partridge are considered game birds, not poultry)

The muscle tissue of poultry is similar to meats in that it contains 72% water, 20% protein, 7% fat and 1% minerals. Unlike red meat, poultry does not contain intramuscular fat known as marbling. Instead, a bird stores fat in its skin, abdominal cavity and the fat pad near its tail.

Poultry fat is softer and has a lower melting point than other animal fats. It is easily rendered during cooking.

As with red meats, poultry muscles that are used more often tend to be tougher than those used less frequently. Also, the muscles of an older bird are tougher than a younger one.

The presence or absence of myoglobin in poultry muscles gives its dark or light color. Since domesticated birds don't fly, their breast and wings are light color and tender. Birds that do fly have only dark meat

Storing Poultry

Poultry is highly perishable and particularly susceptible to contamination by salmonella bacteria. It is critical that poultry be stored at the correct temperatures. Fresh poultry should be stored on ice or at 32-34 degrees. Frozen poultry should be kept at 0 degrees. Poultry should be thawed slowly under refrigeration.

Never cook poultry that is still partially frozen. It will be impossible to cook the product evenly and the areas that were still frozen may not reach the temperatures necessary to destroy harmful bacteria.

Turkey Classes

Class	Age	Weight	Cooking Method
Fryer/Roaster	< 16 weeks	4-9lb/2-4kg	Roast, sauté, grill
Young	< 8 months	8-22lb/3-10kg	Roast
Yearling	< 15 months	10-30lb/4-13kg	Roast or Stew
Mature	> 15 months	10-30lb/4-13kg	Stew, grind

The older the bird, the tougher, but more flavorful the meat. Be cautious of "Kosher" or "Self-basting" turkeys that may contain salts and preservatives.

Procedure for Carving Cooked Poultry

1) Remove the leg by pulling the leg and thigh away from the breast and cut where ball meets socket in the middle of the joint next to the breast. Always try to cut through natural joints, and not cut directly through bone. Cut like a surgeon.
2) Remove the wing by finding where wing joint meets rib cage and cut through joint.
3) Remove the breast by cutting slightly to the side of the breast bone, down to the rib cage, and cutting with the contour of the ribs.
4) Make a horizontal cut from where the thigh was down to the rib cage. This should remove the breast in one large piece.
5) Repeat on the opposite side of the turkey, removing leg, thigh, wing, then breast.

It's easier to carve consistent pieces of turkey breast when not trying to cut on the carcass. Remove breast meat first, then slice for a better presentation.

Sanitation and Cross-Contamination

Make sure all work surfaces, cutting boards, knives, hands and other equipment used to prepare poultry are clean and sanitary. Be careful that juices and trimmings do not come in contact with other foods. Anything coming in contact with raw poultry should be cleaned and sanitized before it comes in contact with other food. Cooked foods should never be placed in containers that were used to hold raw product. Kitchen towels used to clean up should be washed. Sanitize with 100ppm bleach solution

Duck

Duck is most often a roaster duckling. It contains only dark meat and large amounts of fat. Duck has a high percentage of bone to fat to meat. A four-pound duck will only feed 2 people, a four-pound chicken will feed 4.

Goose

A goose contains only dark meat and has very fatty skin. It is usually roasted at high temperatures to render the fat. It is often served with an acidic fruit based sauce to offset the fattiness.

Guinea

A guinea or guinea fowl is the domesticated descendant of a game bird. It has both light and dark meat and flavor similar to pheasant. Guinea is tender enough to sauté, but fat should be added to a roasted guinea due to its lean nature. Guinea is more popular in Europe than the US.

Pigeon

Referred to as squab, the meat is dark, tender and well suited for broiling, sautéing or roasting. Squab has very little fat.

Turkey

The second most popular poultry in the US. It has both dark and light meat and a relatively small amount of fat. Younger turkey can be prepared in almost any manner.

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