



# Handling, Using & Storing Poultry

Written by:

Laurie Messing, Extension Educator

Jeannine Schwehofer, Extension Educator

*Michigan-raised poultry is available year-round.*

## Recommendations:

All poultry sold in retail stores must have a seal from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that shows it was “inspected for wholesomeness by the USDA.” This seal certifies that the poultry was inspected and is free from disease (USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, 2014, July).

## Storage & Food Safety:

- To prevent cross-contamination in the grocery cart or in your refrigerator, always place poultry in plastic bags to keep juices from leaking or dripping onto other food items.
- Place raw poultry on ice if you expect the trip from the market to your refrigerator to last more than one hour. This is especially important in warm weather.
- Raw poultry should be stored in a bowl or on a platter in the bottom of the refrigerator. Your refrigerator temperature should be 38 degrees to 40 degrees F or lower. Store fresh, raw poultry for no more than one to two days.
- Rinsing poultry before cooking is no longer recommended. Rinsing poultry spreads tiny droplets of contamination around the sink and kitchen area. Any bacteria present on the poultry will be effectively destroyed in the cooking process.



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- Always wash cutting boards, utensils and surfaces that have touched raw poultry with hot, soapy water, and then sanitize with 1 teaspoon of regular bleach in 1 quart of warm water.
- Use or freeze products with a “sell by” date within one to two days of purchase.
- Use cooked chicken that has been safely refrigerated within three to four days.

## Thawing:

*Always* thaw meats in the refrigerator, in the microwave or in cold water. *Never* thaw meat on the counter.

- It is best to allow plenty of time for slow, safe thawing in the refrigerator. Small pieces of meat may defrost within one to two days. Large items will take longer – approximately one day for each 5 pounds of weight. Use thawed poultry within two days of defrosting.

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- After defrosting meat in the microwave, it is necessary to cook it immediately because some areas of the food may become warm and even begin to cook during microwaving.
- For fast thawing, place food in a leakproof plastic bag and immerse it in cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes to be sure it stays cold. After thawing, cook the poultry immediately.

### Marinating:

Always marinate meat in the refrigerator. Chicken may be marinated for up to two days in the refrigerator (USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, 2014, July). If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on the cooked food, set some aside before adding the raw meat. Do not save marinade for future use, and discard marinade after cooking the meat.

### Cutting:

Whole chickens can often be purchased at a savings compared with select individual cuts. A cutting guide is available from the National Chicken Council at <http://eatchicken.com/chicken-cooking-tips-food-safety.aspx>.

### Cooking:

Research indicates that color and texture are not safe ways of determining the doneness of poultry products. Use a food thermometer to make sure the meat reaches the correct temperature. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (2012, June) recommends that all poultry products be cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees F.

Younger birds such as roasters or broilers should be grilled, fried, roasted or baked. Poultry from older birds will be less tender and should be stewed or braised.

### Yield:

**Table 1. Approximate number of 3-ounce servings per pound for various cuts of poultry.**

Type of cut	Servings per pound
Chicken	
Whole chicken	2.5
Breast, bone-in	2.5
Breast, boneless	4
Thighs	2.5
Drumsticks	2
Leg quarter	2
Wings	1.5
Turkey	
Whole turkey	2.5
Breast, bone-in	3
Breast, boneless	4
Thighs	3
Drumsticks	2.5
Wings	2.5
Ground turkey	4

Adapted from Burson, 1989.

### Canning:

Poultry **must be canned in a pressure canner** for a safe food product.

Choose freshly killed and dressed, healthy animals. Large chickens are more flavorful than fryers. Dressed chicken should be chilled for six to 12 hours before canning. Remove excess fat. Cut the chicken into suitable sizes for canning. Can with or without bones.

**Hot pack** – Boil, steam or bake meat until about two-thirds done. Add 1 teaspoon salt per quart to the jar, if desired. Fill jars with pieces and hot broth, leaving 1 ¼-inch headspace.

**Raw pack** – Add 1 teaspoon salt per quart, if desired. Fill jars loosely with raw meat pieces, leaving 1 ¼-inch headspace. Do not add liquid.

Adjust lids and process the jars following the recommendations in Table 2 or Table 3 according to the type of canner used.

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Table 2. Recommended processing times for chicken or rabbit in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

			Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of			
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (min)	0- 2,000 ft (lb)	2,001 - 4,000 ft (lb)	4,001 - 6,000 ft (lb)	6,001 - 8,000 ft (lb)
<b>Without bones</b>						
Hot and raw	Pints	75	11	12	13	14
	Quarts	90	11	12	13	14
<b>With bones</b>						
Hot and raw	Pints	65	11	12	13	14
	Quarts	75	11	12	13	14

Table 3. Recommended processing times for chicken or rabbit in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

			Canner pressure (PSI) at altitudes of	
Style of pack	Jar size	Process time (min)	0- 1,000 ft (lb)	Above 1,000 ft (lb)
<b>Without bones</b>				
Hot and raw	Pints	75	10	15
	Quarts	90	10	15
<b>With bones</b>				
Hot and raw	Pints	65	10	15
	Quarts	75	10	15

Information on canning (including tables 2 and 3) was adapted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation website at [http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can\\_05/chicken\\_rabbit.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_05/chicken_rabbit.html). The National Center for Home Food Preservation adapted their information from the "Complete Guide to Home Canning," Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 539, USDA, revised 2009.

Let jars stand undisturbed for 24 hours, remove rings, wash jars, label, date and store. If a jar does not seal, reprocess within 24 hours using the same processing time. Store between 50 degrees and 70 degrees F in a clean, cool, dark, dry place.

### Freezing:

Select only high quality, fresh poultry to freeze.

**Packaging** – Package the meat in meal-size portions. Place one layer of freezer paper or wrap between slices or patties of meat so they are easy to separate and to help speed thawing. Wrap the meat in freezer paper, freezer bags or aluminum foil. Seal the packaging well to keep air out and moisture in the package. Freezer containers can also be used for meats frozen in small portions.

Store-bought meats need to be overwrapped because their clear overwrap packaging is not moisture-vapor-resistant. Meat from a meat packer or local butcher typically does not need additional packaging before freezing. Vacuum packaging with home vacuum packagers is also a good choice for packaging. Turkey, quail, dove, duck, pheasant and other gamebirds should be dressed and gutted as soon as possible after shooting. Cool and clean properly. Remove excess fat on wild ducks and geese - it becomes rancid very quickly. Freeze as directed for poultry.

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### Freezing, continued:

Do not stuff poultry or gamebirds before freezing them. During freezing or thawing times, bacteria that cause food-borne illness could easily grow in the stuffing. Commercially stuffed frozen poultry is prepared under special safety conditions that cannot be duplicated at home.

Label, date and freeze the containers or packages of poultry. Seal, label, date and freeze the packages. For best quality, preserve only the amount of poultry that you and your family can consume in one year.

### References:

Burson, D. E. (1989). G89-947 Buying meat by the serving. *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska Lincoln-Extension*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1790&context=extensionhist>

National Center for Home Food Preservation. (2009, Nov.). *Selecting, preparing and canning meat*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia. Retrieved from [http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can\\_05/chicken\\_rabbit.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_05/chicken_rabbit.html)

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2012, June). *Safe minimum internal temperature chart*. Retrieved from [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/625d9435-4f14-46fe-b207-5d6688cb4db5/Safe\\_Minimum\\_Internal\\_Temperature\\_Chart.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/625d9435-4f14-46fe-b207-5d6688cb4db5/Safe_Minimum_Internal_Temperature_Chart.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2014, July). *Chicken from farm to table*. Retrieved from [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/ad74bb8d-1dab-49c1-b05e-390a74ba7471/Chicken\\_from\\_Farm\\_to\\_Table.pdf?MOD=AJPERES](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/wcm/connect/ad74bb8d-1dab-49c1-b05e-390a74ba7471/Chicken_from_Farm_to_Table.pdf?MOD=AJPERES)

### Resources:

National Chicken Council. *Eat Chicken*: <http://www.eatchicken.com/>

National Turkey Federation: <http://www.eatturkey.com/>.

University of Georgia Cooperative Extension. (2006). *So easy to preserve* (5th ed.). Athens, GA.: <http://setp.uga.edu/>

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