

Poultry Industry Frequently Asked Questions Provided by the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association

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Eggs

What are the differences between inspection and grading?

To learn more, go to http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Inspection_&_Grading/index.asp.

What's the best way to store eggs?

The best place for an egg is in its carton on an inside refrigerator shelf. The carton's sponginess insulates the egg from jolts which can cause cracks. The carton also helps to prevent the loss of moisture and carbon dioxide to maintain quality, maintain the proper egg temperature, and keep the egg from absorbing undesirable refrigerator odors and food flavors.

What is the maximum storage temperature under which eggs should be stored?

45 degree Fahrenheit

Where can I find information on organic eggs?

Eggs that are labeled organic and have the U.S. Department of Agriculture organic seal on the carton were produced following the USDA National Organic Program standards. To learn more, go to www.ams.usda.gov/nop.

What are free-range eggs?

Free-range eggs are from hens that live outdoors or have access to the outdoors. Modifications for seasonal variations are acceptable. The nutrient content of eggs from free-range hens is the same as those from hens housed in production facilities with cages.

Do egg laying hens receive hormones?

Egg laying hens are not given hormones. Some egg cartons say that the eggs are hormone free; however, this is true for all eggs in commercial egg production in the United States.

What does antibiotic free mean?

Some egg cartons say that the hens were not given antibiotics. This statement is true for all eggs produced in the United States, even if it is not specified on the carton. Hens may be given antibiotics for therapeutic purposes when ill; however, when they are ill, hens typically stop laying eggs.

What does Grade A mean?

Eggs are graded based on their quality and appearance. Grade AA eggs have thick, firm whites and high, round yolks. Their shells are clean and unbroken. Grade A eggs are like Grade AA, but their whites are "reasonably" firm. Grade A eggs are usually sold in stores. Grade B eggs have thin whites and wider yolks. The shells are unbroken, but might show slight stains.

How are eggs packed?

An egg is placed in the carton with the large end up. This helps keep the air cell in place and the yolk centered. During the packing process, eggs are separated by size. The minimum weights per dozen are: Jumbo (30 ounces); Extra Large (27 ounces); Large (24 ounces); Medium (21 ounces); Small (18 ounces); and Pee Wee (15 ounces).

How do you tell if an egg is hard-cooked or raw?

Spin it! If the egg spins easily, it is hard-cooked. If the egg wobbles, it is raw.

Are the eggs I buy at my local supermarket fertile?

The eggs sold at grocery stores are unfertilized eggs. The hens that lay these eggs will never see a rooster in their lifetime. Fertilized eggs are not common although they are available at some specialty stores.

Where can I find information on egg nutrition?

Try the Egg Nutrition Center. Go to <http://www.enc-online.org/> to view the Web site.

How many eggs does a hen lay in a year?

The average number of eggs laid by a hen in a year is 259. A hen starts laying eggs at 19 weeks of age. As a hen grows older, she produces larger eggs.

Are artificial color additives permitted in chicken feed?

No. The yolk's color depends on the hen's diet. Hens that eat feed containing yellow corn or alfalfa produce medium yellow yolks. Hens that eat feed containing wheat or barley produce lighter color yolks. Natural yellow-orange substances such as marigold petals may be added to light colored feeds to enhance the yolk color.

Food Safety**Is there a difference in quality between fresh and frozen poultry?**

Both fresh and frozen poultry are inspected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service. The quality is the same. It is personal preference whether you buy fresh or frozen poultry.

How long can chicken remain in the freezer?

If properly packaged, frozen chicken should maintain top quality in a home freezer for up to one year.

Are hormones used in the production of chicken?

No hormones are used in U.S. chicken production. The Food and Drug Administration strictly prohibits the use of hormones in broiler-fryers. Nor are additives allowed on fresh chicken. If the chicken is processed, however, additives such as salt or sodium erythorbate may be added, but must be listed on the product label.

Grilling

What is the best way to thaw chicken before grilling?

Always thaw chicken in the refrigerator or microwave, never on the kitchen counter or picnic table. Always keep uncooked meat refrigerated until it is to be placed on the grill or place meat in an insulated cooler near the grill, out of direct sunlight.

How can I speed up the time it takes to grill chicken?

Chicken can be partially cooked in the microwave before being placed on the grill. Partially cooked chicken should be grilled immediately.

How do I keep chicken from sticking to the grill?

Coat the grids on the grill with vegetable cooking spray or brush them with cooking oil. Apply tomato-based sauces or those containing fruit, sugar or other sweeteners during the last 20-30 minutes of grilling to prevent over-browning.

How do I get the most flavorful grilled chicken?

To avoid loss of juices, use only long-handled tongs for turning chickens, not a fork. For a smoked flavor when cooking on a covered grill, add water-soaked chips of wood (black walnut, pecan, hickory, peach or pear). Avoid cedar, spruce, pine, and fir because they give a bitter flavor.

What temperature should my chicken reach on the grill?

Use a meat thermometer for the most accurate reading. The internal temperature should reach 180° F for whole chicken or parts with bones. Boneless parts should reach 160° F. When in doubt, remove the chicken to a plate and cut with a knife to make sure all flesh is opaque throughout.

Litter

How much litter does a chicken produce?

During the typical 47-day growout period, the typical broiler chicken will generate approximately two pounds of litter (manure mixed with wood shavings or similar materials). This translates to about .7 ounce a day per bird, although that will vary considerably over the life of the bird. Please note that this generation rate is for litter. Actual manure generation will be lower because it is only a fractional component of litter.

Poultry

What does the “fresh” rule mean to consumers?

Go to http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Poultry_Label_Says_Fresh/index.asp for an explanation.

What is the liquid I sometimes see in the bottom of the chicken tray?

Many people think the pink liquid in packaged fresh chicken is blood, but it is mostly water which was absorbed by the chicken during the chilling process. Blood is removed from poultry during slaughter and only a small amount remains in the muscle tissue. An improperly bled chicken would have cherry red skin and be condemned at the plant.

How do I get into the poultry business?

Try contacting your local county extension agent or the poultry science department at the state university for information and publications. Go to <http://www.poultryegg.org/faq/docs/heads.pdf> to obtain a list of contacts at the universities.

Recipes

In addition to eatchicken.com and eatturkey.com, there are numerous Web sites that incorporate chicken recipes. Go to <http://www.poultryegg.org/faq/docs/recipes.txt> for a sample list.

Terminology

What is a broiler?

A broiler is a young chicken raised for meat and meat products. Broilers weigh four to five pounds. Broilers are considered mature at 42 to 49 days old. The terms broiler and fryer are sometimes used interchangeably.

What is a roaster?

A roaster is a slightly older, slightly larger bird raised to be sold for pan-roasting or processing.

What does "processed" mean?

Processed chicken or turkey products are those that have been cooked, marinated, ground, deboned or otherwise altered to change their form or texture and/or add convenience for consumers.

Statistics

Where can I find statistics on poultry and egg production?

Go to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service Web site at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Browse/>.

Poultry Statistics Books Available

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service has released its 2002 Annual Summary of Poultry Market Statistics. It contains tabulated data of the year's reports on poultry and egg

market prices, charts and graphs on average prices, egg movement reports, weekly slaughter numbers, etc. The report costs \$20 for U.S. delivery, \$25 for Canadian delivery or \$30 for shipment overseas. Contact Poultry Market News at (515) 284-4471 for more information.

Turkey

Can turkeys fly?

Domesticated turkeys cannot fly; however, wild turkeys can fly for short distances up to 55 miles per hour. Wild turkeys can also run 20 miles per hour.

How much turkey is consumed at Thanksgiving?

Approximately 690 million pounds of turkey are consumed in the United States each Thanksgiving, according to the National Turkey Federation.

How long can you store leftover turkey dishes in the refrigerator?

Cooked turkey should not be stored more than three or four days. Stuffing and gravy should not be left in the refrigerator more than one or two days. Other cooked turkey dishes can remain in the refrigerator for three or four days.

Did you know these fun Thanksgiving facts?

- * One in four Americans breaks their diets on Thanksgiving.
- * Benjamin Franklin wanted to make the wild turkey the national bird of the United States.
- * On a quiet night, you can hear a turkey gobbling from a mile away.
- * Thanksgiving was celebrated on the last Thursday of November until 1941 when President Roosevelt signed the bill to move it ahead one week.
- * About 280 million turkeys are raised and sold for Thanksgiving celebrations.
- * Israel has the highest consumption of turkey per capita at 26 lbs per year while Americans consume 17 lbs per year.
- * Turducken (turkey/duck/chicken) is a new version of the classic turkey with duck and chicken layered inside.
- * 93% of Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day.
- * New York was the first state to celebrate Thanksgiving.