A2798

How to Cut Up a Chicken

Arthur J. Maurer

Economy-minded consumers are always looking for ways to save money. Here's an easy way to save on the cost of chicken. Instead of buying cut-up poultry–which costs several cents per pound more—buy whole birds and cut them into pieces to suit yourself.

Before you begin, make sure that you have a clean cutting surface and a good sharp knife. It is not necessary to use a cleaver or to break bones in the standard cutting process, but a poultry shears may be helpful for cutting poultry into even smaller pieces. After the first couple of trials, you should become familiar with the shape and location of the joints making it a simple matter to cut between the bones.

A completely cut-up bird consists of two *wings, two legs* (thighs and drumsticks may be separated), two or three *breast* pieces, the *back* (may be whole or cut into two pieces), and the *neck* plus the *giblets* (heart, liver, and gizzard). Young chickens such as broilers or fryers may also be halved or quartered for barbecuing. Halves are recommended for barbecuing if grill space is sufficient. The halves can be easily quartered for serving after the barbecuing is completed. Quartered birds have more flesh exposed which can result in increased dryness.

When buying fresh chicken for the freezer, it is generally more convenient to cut them up before freezing. A number of birds can be done at one time. If the pieces are packaged in a single layer, they will freeze faster and take less freezer space. Thawing also takes less time. Decide on the desired form (pieces or halves) needed and cut up birds accordingly.

Freeze parts in meal-sized packages. Plastic wrap placed between the pieces prior to freezing will prevent them from freezing together in one big chunk. Place the chicken pieces in moisture-vapor-proof heavy polyethylene or double bags (lightweight bags may be punctured by exposed bones). Press the sides of the bag to remove as much of the air as possible. Close the bag tightly with a twister or freezer rubber band. Label the package listing the contents, weight, and date. The pieces should be frozen at 0° F or lower and may be kept for later use (within 3 to 6 months).

To cut up, halve, or quarter a chicken, follow the illustrations and directions given below.

Cutting Up A Chicken

A

Stretch the wing and cut through the joint next to the body. The "thumb" portion of the wing tip, or the entire wing tip, can be removed to avoid puncturing the packaging material.

F

Divide the back into two pieces by making a cut along the side of the last rib to the backbone on both sides of the carcass. Then break the back at the cuts and cut through the remaining connective tissue to separate the pelvic section from the rib cage.

G

Halve the breast by cutting down to the bone just ahead of the keel and breaking in two. The front part of the breast contains the wishbone.

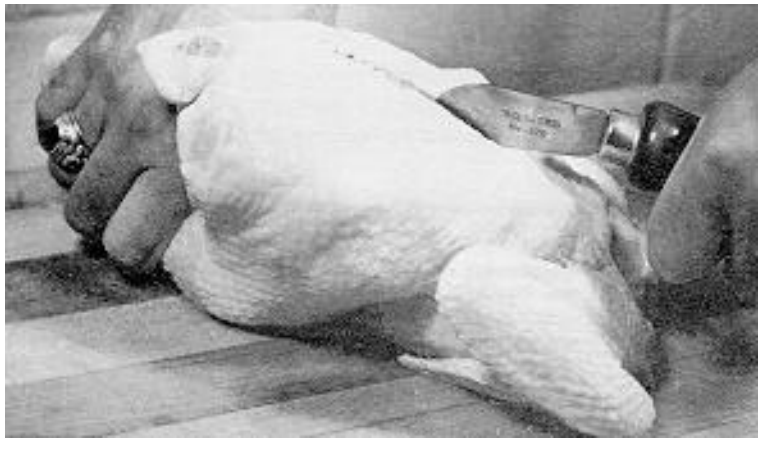
H

Another method of halving the breast is to cut through the white cartilage at the V of the neck and then remove the breastbone to separate the breast lengthwise. Bend each side of the breast back and push up to snap out the breast bone. Then separate the breast by cutting the two halves apart.

Halving A Fryer

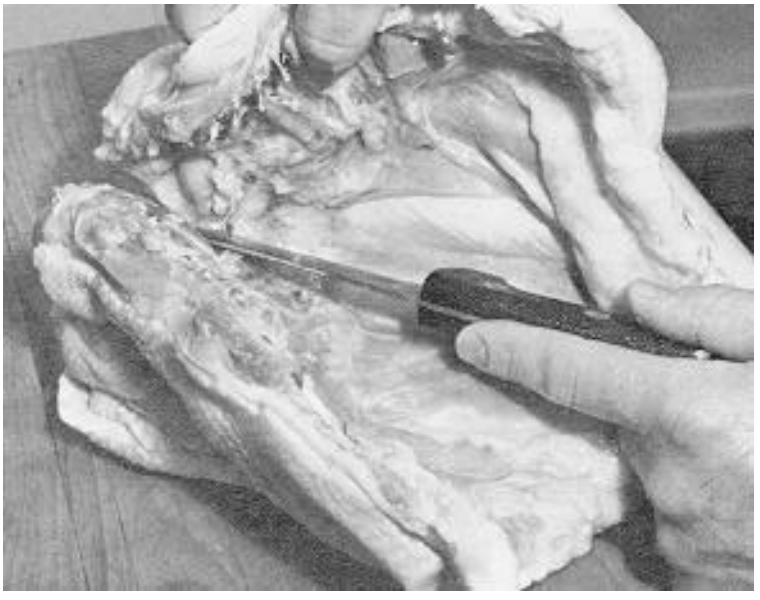
A

Place the fryer on its breast and cut along one side of the backbone from rear to front using a sharp knife or shears.



B

Nick the lower part of the "V" of the wishbone with a knife and slit the neck skin in that area. Remove the breastbone and separate the two halves as shown in illustration H above.



Quartering A Fryer

Cut between the breast and thigh of each half to obtain quarters.

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