



Poultry Quality

Often, consumers will notice an abnormality in food and question whether it is safe. Poultry is no exception as indicated by the following points.

What Does the Grade Mean?

Grade statements associated with poultry provide the consumer with some assurance of meat quality in terms of degree of meatiness and freedom from defects such as bruises, broken bones, feathers, cuts and discolouration. Canada Grade A identifies poultry with optimal form and minimal defects. It does not guarantee freedom from pathogens.

Liquid in the Package

The pink liquid in packaged fresh chicken is mostly water absorbed during the chilling processes used in slaughterhouses. It is not blood. Improperly bled poultry has a cherry red skin.

Freezer Burn

Greyish brown spots on poultry is caused by freezer burn. This happens when the meat is exposed to air during freezing. These do not pose a health hazard but should be cut away before or after cooking for quality reasons. Heavily freezer burned products should be discarded as they may be too dry or tasteless.

Prestuffed Poultry

Prestuffed poultry is not recommended whether purchased or prepared in the home because home refrigerators may not be able to keep the stuffing cold. Poultry should be stuffed just prior to cooking.

Frozen, prestuffed poultry is available in stores.

These should be cooked from the frozen state to ensure safety.

Cooking is complete when a meat thermometer verifies that the meat and the stuffing has reached a minimum temperature of 165°F.

Skin Colour

The colour of poultry skin varies from cream colour to yellow. The colour is dependent on what the bird ate and is not a measure of nutritional value, flavour, tenderness or fat content.

Dark Bones

Darkened meat around the bones occurs in young poultry. The bones have not calcified enough to prevent bone marrow from seeping into the meat. This pigment darkens during cooking. There is no health risk associated with this meat.

Pink Meat

Rubbery, pink flesh and pink juice is a sign that poultry is undercooked. However, if the meat has reached 165°F and the juices run clear, it should be safe to eat. The pink colour of fully cooked poultry arises when haemoglobin forms a heat resistant pigment.

Giblets

The colour of giblets, particularly the liver, can vary from mahogany to yellow. Feed, breed and the birds metabolism can account for the colour variation. However, if the liver is green, discard it, as it contains retained bile. The remainder of the bird should be safe to eat.