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EC1460 Broilers Ready for Cooking

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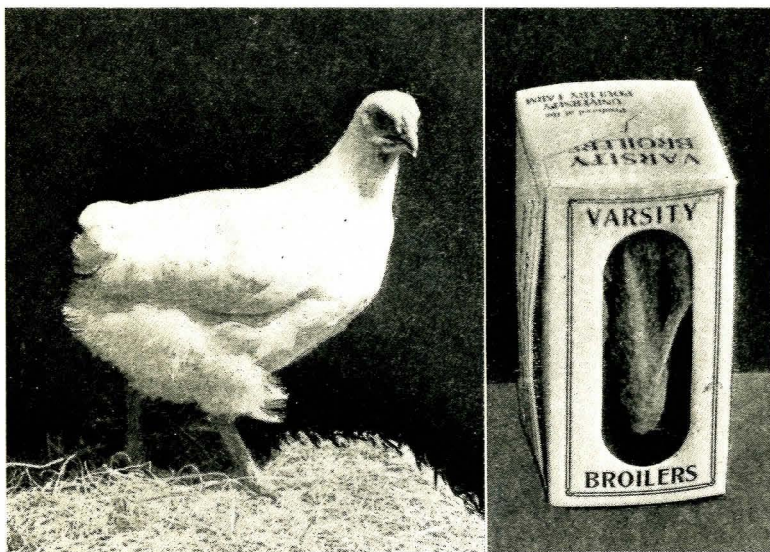
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April, 1931

Broilers Ready for Cooking



The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Broilers Ready for Cooking

J. R. REDDITT

It has been demonstrated in many ways with many products that it pays to please the buyer. In fact, it is regarded as necessary wherever there is competition. Food products above all must be pleasing in quality and appearance, because good foods are expected to look the part. There are too many producers of other fine food products for poultry folks to think for a moment that housewives are going to buy chickens regardless of quality.

Tradition is a strong influence, and while it may be hard to establish, it may be harder to dethrone. Traditionally, poultry is in the luxury class of food products. Those who can afford luxuries can also afford to be discriminating. An example of the profitableness of catering to the "whims" of the buyer is seen in the sale of completely dressed broilers at the University of Nebraska. This method has speeded up their sale astonishingly. In an effort to dispose of surplus cockerels it was decided to try dressing and drawing them, then putting them into attractive cartons and freezing them.

PREPARATION AND INSPECTION OF BIRDS FOR SLAUGHTER

Chickens intended for slaughter should be starved 12 hours before being killed but given plenty of clean water. This is to save feed as well as empty the crop and digestive system of as much feed as possible.

If a careful inspection can be given all birds before they are killed, many of the lower grades and rejects can be kept out and saved for a later market. Select birds that have made fast growth and are plump and well feathered. It is impossible to make an attractive carcass out of a chicken that is full of pinfeathers. All bruised, crippled, poorly fleshed, sickly and rousy birds are to be rejected.

Since weight is an important factor in determining grades, it is a good plan to have scales handy for weighing birds of doubtful weight. It is also well to keep in mind that the weight lost in dressing and shrinkage will be 12-15 per cent and that the total loss in weight when drawn will amount to about 40 per cent of the live weight.

EQUIPMENT FOR KILLING AND DRESSING

Unless equipment has been provided for reducing to a minimum the blemishes due to injury and rough handling, it would be advisable to give this first thought. Much of the profit of the venture is often lost because of the number of birds being graded as seconds as a result of bruises, torn skin and broken legs or wings. Chickens are rather nervous and easily excited, and when handled in large numbers, unless necessary precautions have been taken, will fly against anything and may trample and bruise themselves quite severely.

Probably the best plan for handling chickens at dressing time is to house them in a half darkened room where they can be easily caught without disturbance to the whole flock. Woven wire enclosed pens with woven wire over the tops provide simple, temporary means of corralling the birds for the short time they are held before slaughtering. Catching hooks are generally used to catch the birds in these enclosures.

Killing requires a means of suspending the birds by their feet. There are two common practices for doing this. A stout, flexible cord attached and suspended from a beam above to a convenient height for the picker, may be used. A large wooden button attached to the free end of the cord facilitates the quick tying of the feet. The other method is to fashion shackles for each foot out of a single piece of heavy wire by making a double loop so that the feet are held apart, thus permitting the feathers to be picked from the inside of the legs



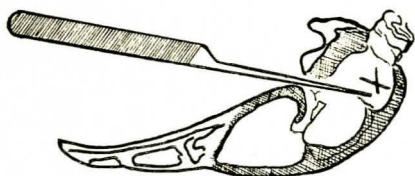
with less effort. The shackles are suspended from above by a stout cord.

A sticking knife with a long, stout, sharp-pointed blade is best for killing. A very satisfactory knife may be made from an old file or table knife.

Since semi-scalding has now become the popular method of picking, a wooden tub should be provided for this and a thermometer for use in maintaining the proper temperature. Exact temperature is quite important.

Simple equipment for singeing, such as a blow torch or a cup of burning wood alcohol, makes this an easy task. An advantage of the alcohol flame is that it does not blacken or smut the carcass as in the case of a blow torch.

Heavy scissor-like shears make the dressing of the broiler a much easier task than the use of knives. It also makes a neater and quicker job. These shears used in cutting off the head, the legs, and cutting out the backbone may be obtained from almost any hardware store. If they are not carried in stock, they can be ordered.



KILLING

Suspend the birds for slaughter by both feet and proceed as follows:

1. Grasp the bird by the bony part of the skull with the back of the head in the hollow of the left hand. Do not close the fingers around the throat, this will cut off the flow of blood.

2. Insert the long, narrow-bladed knife well into the mouth with the point toward the side of the head held by the fingers. With enough pressure to make a clean cut draw the knife diagonally toward the other side of the head. If the cut has been properly made there will be a free flow of blood immediately. Let this run a second before braining.

3. Brain for dry picking by thrusting the point of the knife through the groove which runs along the center of the roof of the mouth until it pierces the brain in the back or rear

part of the skull. A sudden convulsive jerk and squawk indicates a good stick, which causes a loosening of the feathers and makes picking easy.

4. Immediately following the sticking, hang a weight such as a small can of sand or a piece of brick on the head to prevent the blood being smeared all over the picker.

Probably the most important part of the whole procedure is the bleeding. The birds must be bled thoroughly. If they are not the carcass will have a reddened appearance. It will not keep well, and of course, cannot go into the top grades. Do not allow the blood to clot in the mouth and thus stop the flow.

DRY PICKING

Dry picking begins as soon as the bird is brained and before it is dead. Picking must be done in a hurry or the feathers will set and be quite hard to pick. With a twisting motion all the long tail feathers are removed first, and with one pull. The wings are next, then the shanks, and body. If too large a handful of feathers are pulled at once, the skin is likely to be torn and since this is serious enough to make a No. 3 grade out of a No. 1, it is evident that care must be exercised throughout the whole process of picking. Rubbing the birds, especially the shanks, causes them to turn red and generally have an unsightly appearance. Remove all feathers by picking. Work fast.

SEMI-SCALD PICKING

Semi-scald or dry-scald is a more recent method of scalding birds for picking. The method is as follows: Kill the birds by bleeding only. The same process of killing is followed except the birds are not brained. When they are dead and completely drained of blood, immerse for thirty seconds in water heated to a temperature of 126 or 127 degrees Fahrenheit.

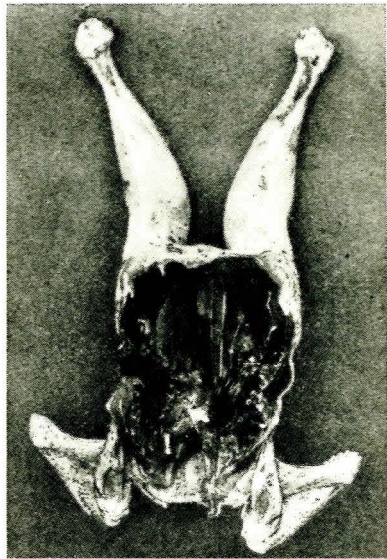
By semi-scalding is meant the use of water for scalding at a low enough temperature to permit the bird to have and retain the appearance of a dry picked chicken and be free of the "cooked-skin" of the average scalded chicken.

Picking is in the order already described. The important feature of this method is the temperature of the water. This must be watched very closely or a scalded, skin-cooked carcass will result.

COMPLETELY DRESSING BROILERS

Ordinarily, a dressed chicken is one that has been killed and picked. In preparing the broilers for cooking, however, all of the inedible parts are removed. These include the head, feet, and entrails. The process is as follows. After a number have been picked, they are first singed and brushed. Following this the head and feet are cut off and the backbone and neck removed. In making the incision for removing the backbone, the lower blade of the scissors is inserted in the body cavity just above the vent. Care must be used to keep this lower blade close to the back in order to avoid cutting into the intestines. By cutting clear through the length of the body in this way and on both sides of the backbone, it and the neck may be lifted out.

When the backbone has been removed, all of the inside organs within the body cavity may be removed with one sweep of the hand. The liver cleaned gizzard, heart, backbone and neck (broken and folded in the middle) are put back into the body cavity. The carcass is then folded, plumped and boxed in a neat carton.



MARKETING THE BROILERS

The cartons used are $3\frac{1}{2}$ by $3\frac{1}{2}$ by 6 inches in size. In smaller quantities they cost about three cents each. In larger quantities they can be had for two cents or less. Additional information can be supplied by the Poultry Husbandry Department.

Have the cartons made up in gay, attractive colors to catch the eye of the prospective buyer. Many articles are their own salesman and must sell on appearance.

If the carton has been coated with wax or paraffin at the time it is manufactured, it will not absorb moisture from the

carcass. Where this absorption process takes place, the cartons have a blood stained appearance which detracts very materially from the attractiveness of them.

Because the bird is drawn and has the head and feet removed, it is naturally lighter in weight than ordinary dressed chickens sold over the counter. For instance, a two and quarter pound broiler will dress out about a pound and a half, which if sold for 80 cents will appear to be a high price for broilers. To offset this, it is suggested that some explanatory comment be put into the carton. It could be worded as follows:

2 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. broiler @ 28c a lb.....	\$0.63
Dressing cost07
Cost of carton.....	.03
Retailing cost07

\$0.80

Such an explanation as this helps the buyer realize that although he has only a pound and a half of chicken, he has just as much edible chicken as he could possibly expect in a two and a quarter pound bird.