

Chicken — The Family Choice

QUICK CHICKEN AND POTATO SKILLET
 2 cups diced cooked chicken
 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
 1 medium onion, diced
 1 medium green pepper, diced
 2 cups diced cooked potatoes
 ½ cup picante sauce or salsa
 1 teaspoon cumin
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ cup reduced-fat Cheddar cheese

In large frypan, place butter or margarine and heat to medium-high temperature. Add onion and pepper and cook until onion is tender, but not brown. Add chicken, potatoes, picante sauce, cumin, and salt; mix well. Cook over low heat 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Top with cheese; cover pan to melt cheese. Serve with additional picante sauce, if desired. Makes 4 servings.

CALIFORNIA CHICKEN WRAPS
 1 pound ground chicken
 salt and pepper to taste
 8 flour tortillas (6-inch)
 1 cup ranch-flavored dip (ranch dip mix and cream cheese)
 2 cups shredded lettuce
 2 cups diced tomatoes
 1½ cups grated cheese

In large frypan, place chicken, salt and pepper and cook, stirring, over medium-high heat about 6 minutes or until chicken is brown and no pink remains. Drain excess fat. Place remaining ingredients in small bowls and line up in order listed. Spread each tortilla with ranch dip; top each with an equal portion of chicken, lettuce, tomatoes, and cheese. Do not fill tortilla too full or it will not wrap well. Fold up ends of tortilla; fold in sides and roll like a cigar. Wrap each tortilla tightly in plastic wrap; chill in refrigerator. Makes 4 servings of two wraps each.

CHICKEN QUESADILLAS
 1 pound ground chicken
 Salt and pepper to taste
 Vegetable cooking spray
 12 flour tortillas (6- or 8-inch)
 1½ cups shredded carrots
 1 cup sliced green onion
 1 cup mild salsa
 1½ cups grated Cheddar or Monterey Jack cheese
 Sour cream

In large frypan, place chicken, salt, and pepper and cook over medium-high heat about 6 minutes or until chicken is brown and no pink remains. Drain excess fat. Line two large baking sheets with foil; spray foil with vegetable cooking spray. Place 3 tortillas on each baking sheet. Top tortillas with equal amounts of chicken, carrots, and onion. Don't overfill tortillas. Drizzle small amount of salsa over all. Top each with cheese. Place a second tortilla over cheese; spray lightly with vegetable cooking spray. Bake in 375°F. oven 10 minutes or until cheese melts. Serve with remaining salsa. Top with sour cream if desired. Makes 6 servings.

CREAMY BAKED CHICKEN WITH VEGETABLES
 4 broiler-fryer chicken breast halves, skinned
 1 can (10¼ ounces) condensed

reduced-fat and sodium cream of mushroom soup
 ¼ teaspoon onion salt, divided
 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
 1 can (24 ounces) whole sweet potatoes in syrup, drained
 1 package (10 ounces) peas and pearl onions, thawed

In large baking dish, place undiluted soup, spreading over bottom of dish. Add chicken breasts, turning to coat. Sprinkle ⅛ teaspoon onion salt over chicken; distribute thyme over chicken and soup. Cover and bake in 350°F. oven 45 minutes. Add sweet potatoes and peas and onions, spooning sauce over vegetables. Sprinkle remaining onion salt over vegetables. Cover and bake 15 minutes more or until chicken and vegetables are fork tender. Makes 4 servings.

Chicken Terminology

Broiler Chicken: A chicken raised for meat and meat products. Typically is 40 to 45 days of age and weighs 3 to 4¼ pounds.

Dressed: The cleaned, defeathered and eviscerated chicken that is ready for sale. Also termed ready-to-cook.

Whole Bird: Ready-to-cook chicken that is not cut up. Generally includes giblets and neck.

Cut-up: Ready-to-cook chicken that has been cut into eight or nine pieces. Parts include:

- Drumsticks — Dark meat — two make a serving.
- Thighs — Dark meat — two make a serving — available with or without bone and/or skin.
- Breasts — Light meat — most often sold as split breasts (breast halves) with or without bone and/or skin — one breast half makes a serving.
- Wings — Light meat — three wings make a serving.
- Giblets — Gizzard, liver, heart — allow ¼ pound per serving.

Halves: Whole chicken split into two parts, generally sold for broiling or grilling.

Quarters: Whole chicken cut into four parts, two breast quarters with wings attached and two leg quarters (drumstick with thigh attached).

Further Processed Products: Chicken products prepared by cooking, marinating, grinding, deboning, dehydrating, or otherwise processing beyond the cut-up form to change form, appearance, texture, or add convenience.

Cooking For A Crowd? Don't Make Them Sick

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — Nancy Wiker, extension agent with Penn State Cooperative Extension will be presenting a workshop on the basics of safe food handling practices at the Lititz Public Library on Tuesday, June 19 from 6 to 8 p.m. It is designed especially for volunteers who prepare, serve, or otherwise handle food at any event.

The workshop is a refresher on the basics of safe food handling. It could make the difference between a great fund raiser or social activity and a food poisoning outbreak that could dam-

Bone up on your egg knowledge with answers to these often-asked questions:

• Does the color of eggshell, yolk or white make a difference?

Eggshell and yolk color may vary, but color has nothing to do with egg quality, flavor, nutritive value or cooking characteristics.

Shell color comes from pigments in the outer layer of the shell and may range in various breeds from white to deep brown. The breed of the hen determines the color of the shell. The difference in shell color is barely skin deep. The pigmented layer is so thin, it can easily be removed by rubbing with sandpaper.

Yolk color depends on the diet of the hen. If she gets plenty of yellow-orange plant pigments known as xanthophylls, they will be deposited in the yolk. Natural yellow-orange substances, such as marigold petals, may be added to light-colored feeds to enhance yolk color. Artificial color additives are not permitted. Yolk pigments are relatively stable and are not lost or changed in cooking.

Egg albumen, or white, in raw eggs is opalescent and does not actually appear white until it is beaten or cooked. A yellow or

greenish cast in raw albumen may indicate the presence of riboflavin. Cloudiness of the raw albumen is due to carbon dioxide which has not had time to escape through the shell and indicates a very fresh egg. The albumen of older eggs is more transparent than that of fresher eggs.

• What are the lumpy things near the yolk?

These thick, ropey pieces of twisted egg white are called chalazae. Their purpose is to anchor the yolk in the center of the egg and they're entirely edible. In fact, the more prominent the chalazae, the fresher the egg. These natural parts of the egg albumen do not interfere with cooking or beating of the white. Although they don't need to be removed, some cooks like to strain them from stirred custard.

• How can I store leftover whites or yolks?

Refrigerate leftover whites in a tightly covered container for up to four days or freeze them for longer storage. Pour whites into freezer containers, seal the containers tightly and label them with the number of whites and the date. For faster thawing and easier measuring, first freeze each white in an ice cube tray

and then transfer the cubes to a freezer container.

Refrigerate unbroken raw yolks covered with water in a tightly covered container and use them within a day or two. For freezing, egg yolks require special treatment because egg yolk thickens or gels when it's frozen. Frozen as is, egg yolk will eventually become so gelatinous it will be almost impossible to use.

To help retard this gelatin, beat in either ⅛ teaspoon salt or 1½ teaspoons sugar or corn syrup for each ¼ cup egg yolks (four large yolks). Label the container with the number of yolks, the date, and whether you've added salt (for main dishes) or sweetener (for baking or desserts).

Thaw frozen eggs overnight in the refrigerator or under running cold water. Use yolks as soon as they're thawed. Once thawed, whites will beat to better volume if allowed to sit at room temperature for about 20 to 30 minutes. Use frozen whites or yolks only in dishes that are thoroughly cooked.

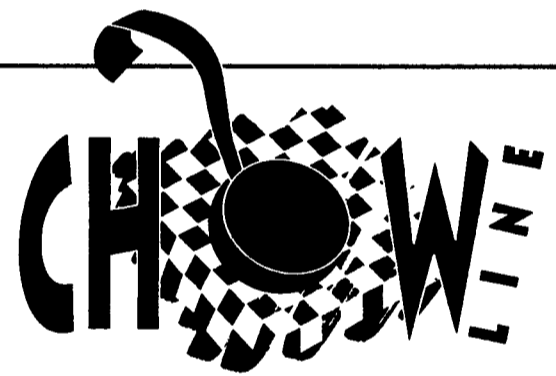
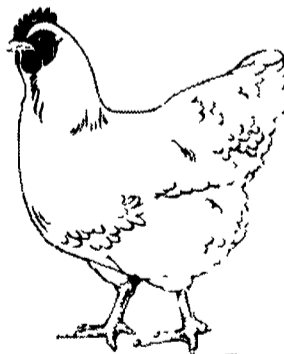
• Use two tablespoons thawed egg white for one large fresh white.

• Use one tablespoon thawed egg yolk for one large fresh yolk.

Irradiation Of Chicken

Irradiation, or cold pasteurization as it is also known, is recognized by food and human health experts as a safe and effective method to help control pathogens on raw meat and poultry. Irradiation was approved for poultry products by the Food and Drug Administration in 1990 and by the Department of Agriculture in 1992.

Irradiation is intended to destroy pathogens that could cause foodborne illness. Although irradiation is effective, normal cooking accomplishes the same end result. Also irradiation at approved levels does not make raw foods sterile, so it still must be handled according to food safety requirements.



Hormones not used in poultry production

I'm starting to get leery of feeding my children chicken because I heard they use a lot of hormones in poultry production these days. Is that true?

Actually, it's not true. In fact, it's completely false. Here's a direct quote from the Food and Drug Administration's website: "Hormones are only approved for use in beef cattle and lamb production. They are not approved for use in poultry, hogs, veal calves or exotic, non-amenable species." In short, it is against the law to use hormones in poultry production. No poultry producer in the United States uses them. They're not in the chicken you serve your family.

But don't think you're going nuts. A cursory look at some animal-rights and vegetarian websites shows that the claim is often made that (the non-existent) hormones used in poultry production can be the cause of all sorts of health concerns. One even claims that hormones are the reason that chickens get so big so quickly these days. In fact, poultry scientists tell us that it's breeding,

nutrition and general health care that helps build nice plump chickens within a matter of weeks.

Sometimes concerns are raised about antibiotics used on chickens. It's true, the animals are often given antibiotics to help prevent disease and increase the efficiency of the feed they eat. However, a withdrawal period is required from the time antibiotics are administered before the bird can be slaughtered. This helps make sure that no residues are present in the bird's system by the time it gets to the consumer.

Still, scientists are concerned that using too many antibiotics in chickens and in other animals will allow disease-causing bacteria to adapt and become resistant. Because of this, more emphasis is being placed on the responsible use of antibiotics, and more restrictions have been placed on their use. It should be noted that the same concerns have been raised about human overuse of antibiotics, too.

Chow Line is a service of The Ohio State University. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.