

## **MSU Extension Publication Archive**

Archive copy of publication, do not use for current recommendations. Up-to-date information about many topics can be obtained from your local Extension office.

How to Cut Up a Chicken

Michigan State University Extension Service

Alden Booren and Christopher Oberg, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition

Issued March 1983

4 pages

The PDF file was provided courtesy of the Michigan State University Library

**Scroll down to view the publication.**

## How To Cut Up a Chicken

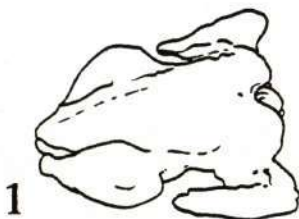
by Alden Booren and Christopher Oberg  
Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition

Whole chickens are usually less expensive than cut-up chickens. You'll save money by cutting it up yourself. Cutting up a chicken is not difficult and the skill can be developed in a short time.

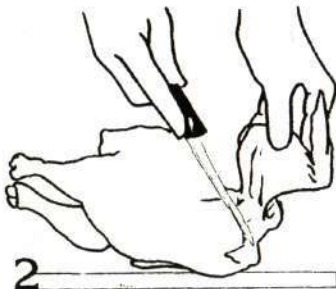
Fryers weighing at least 2½ pounds yield more of the higher priced, meaty pieces—breast halves, legs, thighs and wings—than do smaller birds.

Backs and necks—while they have little meat—make a delicious broth or soup. You can cook the broth and freeze it for later use. The heart, liver and gizzard can be used in soups, casseroles, and gravies.

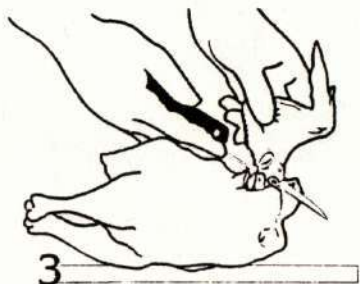
To cut up a whole chicken, you need a cutting board (12" x 15") and a sharp knife. Wood cutting boards are acceptable, however, plastic boards are becoming more common and are recommended because they are easier to clean and sanitize. Many people prefer poultry shears over a knife when cutting chicken. Use whichever you feel most comfortable with.



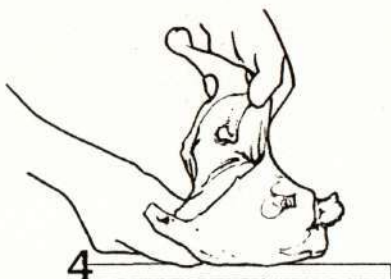
Start with a dressed, drawn (eviscerated) chicken. Remove the neck and by-products (heart, liver and gizzard). They are usually wrapped in paper and placed in the body cavity. The neck and by-products are about 9 percent of the fryer by weight.



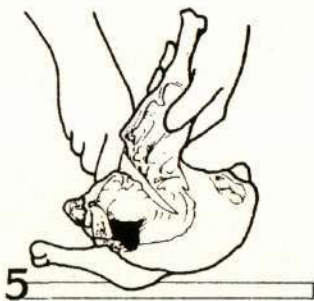
With the chicken placed on the cutting board facing you, grasp the wing tip and lift it away from the body. Cut half way up the wing shank, then down into the joint keeping the knife close to the bone.



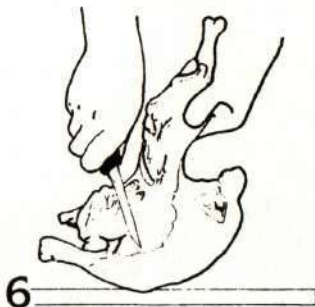
As the knife severs the tendons, rotate the wing backward so the knife passes through the joint leaving as much white meat on the breast as possible. Repeat this procedure on the other wing. Wings are about 12 percent of the fryer.



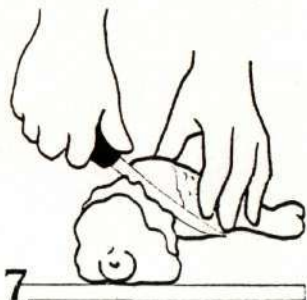
Cut the skin between the thigh and the body of the bird. Be sure to follow the natural separation and avoid cutting into the flesh. Leave as much skin on the breast as possible. Grasp the leg and apply pressure to the hip joint by bending it away from the body as shown. Apply enough pressure to snap the hip joint.



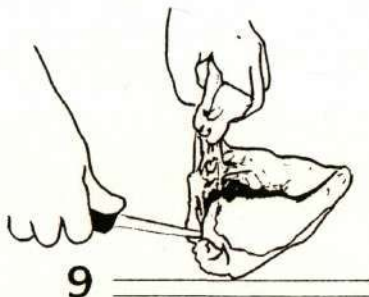
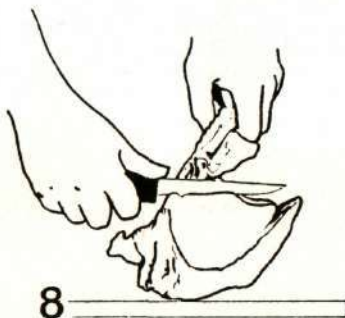
To remove the leg and thigh from the body, cut from the tail toward the neck until the blade reaches the hip joint. Rock the knife in hip socket to sever the connecting tendons.



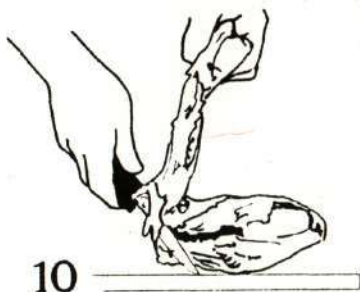
Pull the leg away from the body. If the tendons in the hip are severed, the "oyster" meat from the back will remain with the thigh. Cut the connecting skin.



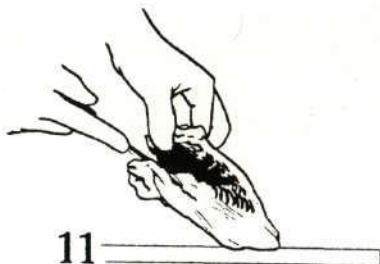
Locate the knee joint by squeezing the thigh and leg together. Cut through the joint to separate the thigh from the leg. Repeat this procedure (4-7) to remove the other leg. The legs or drumsticks are about 16 percent of the fryer while the thighs are about 17 percent.



Place the breast down on the cutting board so the backbone faces up. Grasp the tail and with the neck on the cutting board cut close along the backbone separating the ribs where they join the back. Be careful to stay inside the shoulder blade (flat bone at side of back) and close to the backbone. Do the same on the other side.



Lift the back and neck strip up and out. Cut through the connecting skin. The back from tail to neck is about 18 percent of the fryer.



The breast is the remaining portion of the fryer and is about 28 percent of the fryer. To split the breast, place it skin side down and cut the cartilage at the "v" of the neck. Grasp the breast firmly with both hands placing your thumbs in the rib cage. Bend each side of the breast back as if you were opening a book. Push up with your fingers to snap out the breastbone. Cut the breast in half lengthwise.

As soon as you've cut up the chicken, wash knives and cutting board in hot, soapy water. Rinse well. Wood cutting boards should be sanitized using liquid chlorine bleach. Dilute according to directions on the container. Cover wood surfaces with the chlorine solution and leave 15 minutes. Rinse solution off with boiling water. Avoid contaminating other foods, particularly cooked products, with dirty utensils used in cutting raw chicken.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION  
SERVICE

MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution. Cooperative Extension Service programs are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, or sex.

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Gordon E. Guyer, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, E. Lansing, MI 48824.

This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service or bias against those not mentioned. This bulletin becomes public property upon publication and may be reprinted verbatim as a separate or within another publication with credit to MSU. Reprinting cannot be used to endorse or advertise a commercial product or company.