



## PROCESSING CHICKEN NOTES

I made these notes from scouring the internet videos, websites, and other sources for processing a single chicken without special processing equipment. Use what applies; research what you need.

### PREPARATION

1. Cleaning station – place for processing, including cleaning and holding organs
2. Source of fresh/running water
3. Tables (see cleaning station)
4. Kill cone
5. Sharp knife – Chicago Cutlery 5” boning knife works well
6. Large pot/scalder
7. Thermometer
8. Cooler with ice
9. Kitchen pots with lids for edible organs, guts, etc. – keeps flies out and edibles fresh
10. Trash bags
11. Drop cloths or other ways to contain processing
12. Sawdust to absorb spilled blood
13. 5 gallon bucket for rinsing, etc.
14. Vegetable spray (optional)
15. No feed 24 hours prior for any birds to be slaughtered

### PROCESSING: SLAUGHTER TO PLUCKING

1. Heat up the scalding water temp to between 145-150. Use a thermometer to measure. This is the temperature you want the water to be when you actually scald. Much hotter and it will be too hot; much less and feathers won't pluck well.
2. Hang your killing cone.
3. Spray killing cone and surrounding area with vegetable oil spray for easier cleanup (optional).
4. Have calm bird. Place into kill cone.
5. Have bowl with approx. tablespoon of water under the kill cone to catch blood.
6. Exsanguination. You hold the chicken's head by its comb with one hand and use a sharp knife to slice into each side of the neck, severing the main arteries (carotid and jugular). You know when you've cut the artery because the blood will flow fast and sometimes squirt. Try not to sever the windpipe.
7. Scald. To scald, hold your bird by the feet and dunk it down into the hot water. Make sure you dunk the bird in far enough to wet the smallest feathers on the bottom of the legs, just above the feet.
8. Hold the bird under the water for maybe 3-5 seconds and give it a vigorous little up and down jiggle. Then pull the chicken around 3 seconds before dunking, jiggling, and removing it again.
9. After a couple of dunks, perform a feather pull test. This test is performed by selecting one large wing or tail feather and pulling it. When you do the feather pull test and the feather slides out with no resistance, the bird is scalded to perfection. This could take 2 – 6 or more dunks to achieve.
10. The important thing is that you repeatedly dunk the bird, and each time you remove it from the water, you give a pull on one of those big feathers. Make sure it is only one feather, and when it slides out with absolutely no resistance, the bird is ready to pluck.
11. Pluck feathers.

## PROCESSING: EVISCERATION

12. Rinse plucked carcass in water, removing any remaining pin feathers or other “debris”.
13. Feet: Lay the bird on its back. Grasp a foot and apply downward tension while slicing into the joint; direct your knife blade between the joint and through the tendons. Saw gently ahead and back with the sharp knife while bending back on the foot.
14. Head: Slice into the neck just under the head. Pull head off if you prefer.
15. Remove Crop: Follow esophagus down (non-ribbed tube; ribbed is trachea) to crop and pull it out. You can slit or stretch skin to get to crop. A full crop (fed within last 24 living hours) is easier to find than an empty one. They are affixed a little more firmly to the body, but can be worked away. Discard crop.
16. Remove oil gland from tail. Cut off the deep yellow area that is the oil gland.
17. Cutting into the cavity. Make a very small incision. While the bird is on its back, pinch the tail near the cloaca/butt hole up and angle the knife up to cut a small incision into the body cavity. The smaller the incision, the less likely you’ll cut something you shouldn’t.
18. **Please Note:** When you cut into the bird’s body cavity, no liquid should come out. If liquid (i.e. yellow-colored water) does come pouring out of the opening, the bird is sick. Throw it away!
19. Slowly with 2 fingers on each hand pull the opening larger by pulling in opposite directions.
20. If the bird ate before butchering, it may have poop. When you press down on the intestine, the poop will come out. Rinse it off the bird (don’t get into cavity of bird). Rinse your working surface if poop touches with lots of fresh water and some chlorine diluted solution.
21. Remove viscera. Reach in with fingers tight together but not pushing or digging down or curling. Get esophagus between middle and ring finger. 2 methods:
  - Method 1 –Reach straight back and sweep internal organs out backwards.
  - Method 2 –Sweep from right to left organs out. With either method, be careful NOT to break the gall bladder. Bile will contaminate the meat.
22. Lungs cling more tightly. You can remove them by lifting them with your fingers. Running water helps.
23. Once organs are out of the cavity, separate liver and heart from other organs. They are dark colored. Lungs are bright colored. Immediately put heart and liver in cool water.
24. Cut around the vent to remove viscera fully. Dispose of guts.
25. Give another rinse to the processed body (not guts).

## PROCESSING: CHILLING

26. Put in cooler with ice immediately. You want to chill down the body temperature to under 45 degrees within 4 hours. Most sources recommend chilling and aging chickens for 24 hours, and up to 3 days before freezing. Aging at least 24 hours improves the texture, and that older chickens are better with longer aging, up to perhaps 5 days in the refrigerator for fowl. The properly aged bird should retain a very fresh clean smell with no hint of taint.