

# FACT SHEET

## CHICKEN CUT-UP: FAMILY STYLE

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Cutting up a chicken is easier than most people realize. Some people make the job difficult by using a dull knife or by trying to cut through bones. When it is done properly, the bones are disjointed — not cut. The process is easy and can save you money.

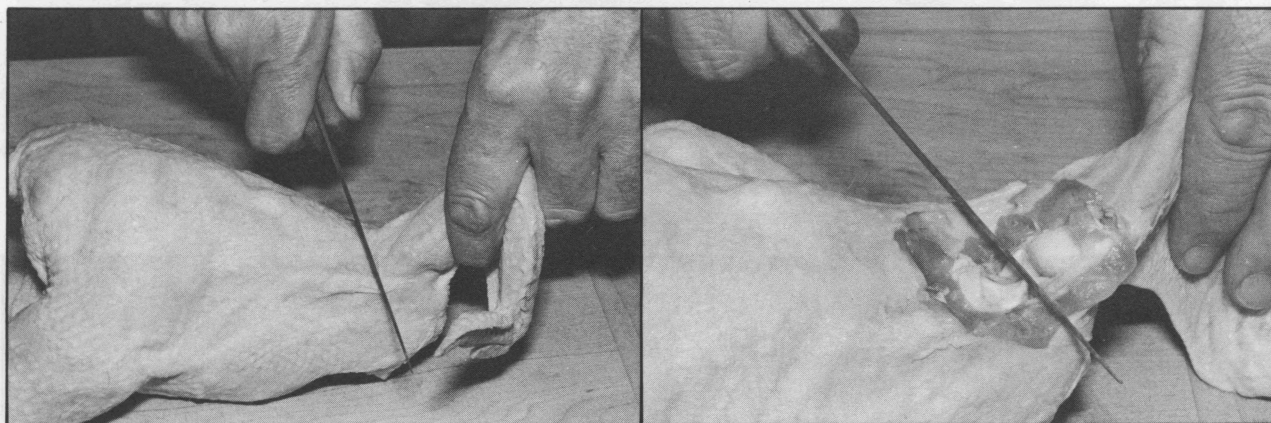
Chicken is often commercially packaged in pieces. It is less expensive, however, to buy a whole chicken and to cut it up yourself. That way you can buy several chickens when they are on special, disjoint and package them as your family prefers and freeze for future use. (See Extension publication B-177 *Freezing Poultry for Home Use*).

There are two basic ways to cut chicken; family style and commercial style. The family style yields 13 pieces while the commercial style yields eight. Although the family cuts are smaller, they are considered ideal for frying because all the pieces are

about the same size.

The commercial type pieces are similar to those packaged in stores. These cuts are commercially advantageous because meat from the wing and back are included on high-priced breast and thigh sections. For complete instructions, refer to Extension publication L-1799 *Chicken Cut-up: Commercial Style*.

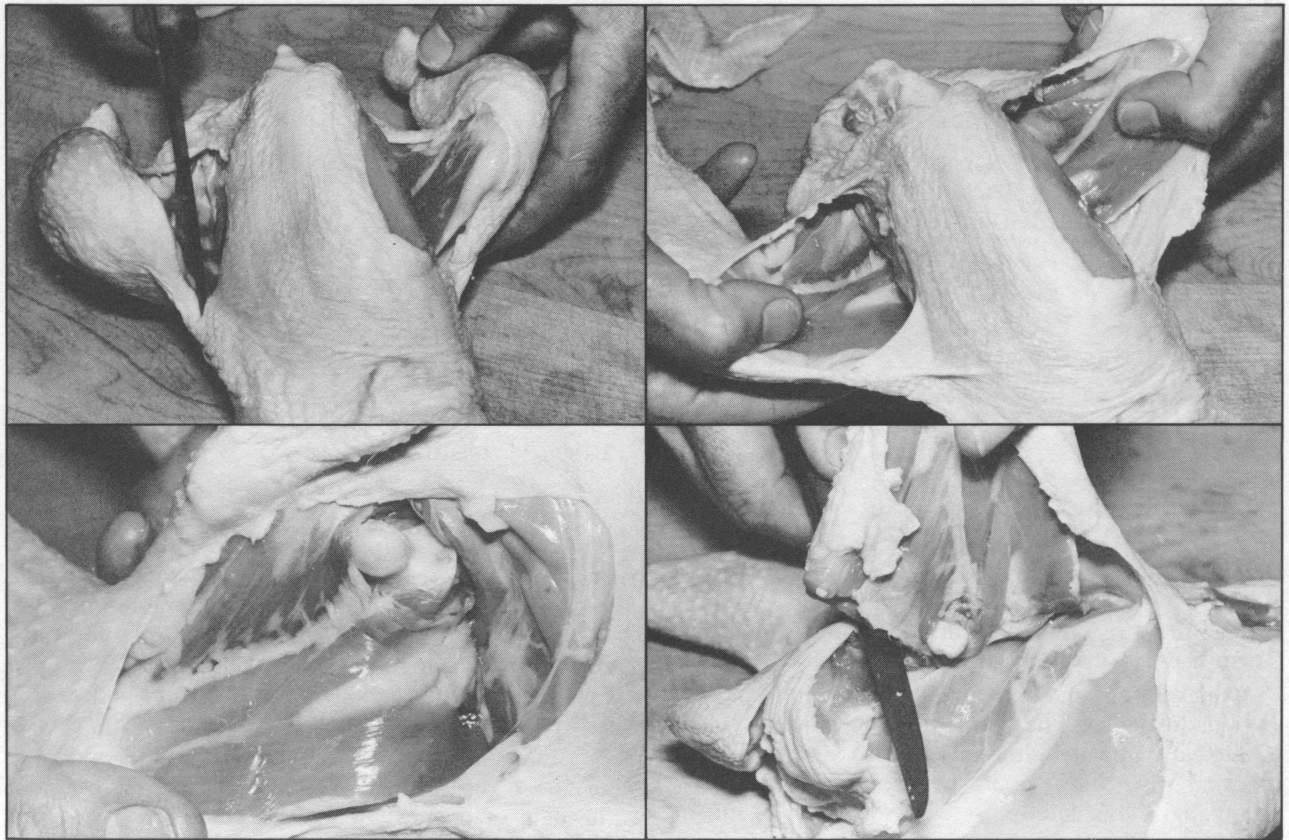
Always use a sharp, 5 or 6 inch, rigid bladed knife for these procedures. You should not have to cut through any bones, except for some small ribs. All other cuts are made through joints. Also use a cutting board that provides plenty of work surface. Keep the board and the working area clean. Before starting, rinse the chicken thoroughly and allow it to drain. Then work quickly, while the chicken is still cold. This makes the cutting easier and prevents bacterial buildup.



Place the chicken on its side and cut slowly into the wing pit. Pulling the wing upward, cut through the cartilage and joint. As the joint separates, turn the knife slightly toward the wing tip to avoid cutting the breast muscle. All cuts should be made gently so that if you accidentally hit a bone, you can stop and find the joint. Remove the other wing the same way.

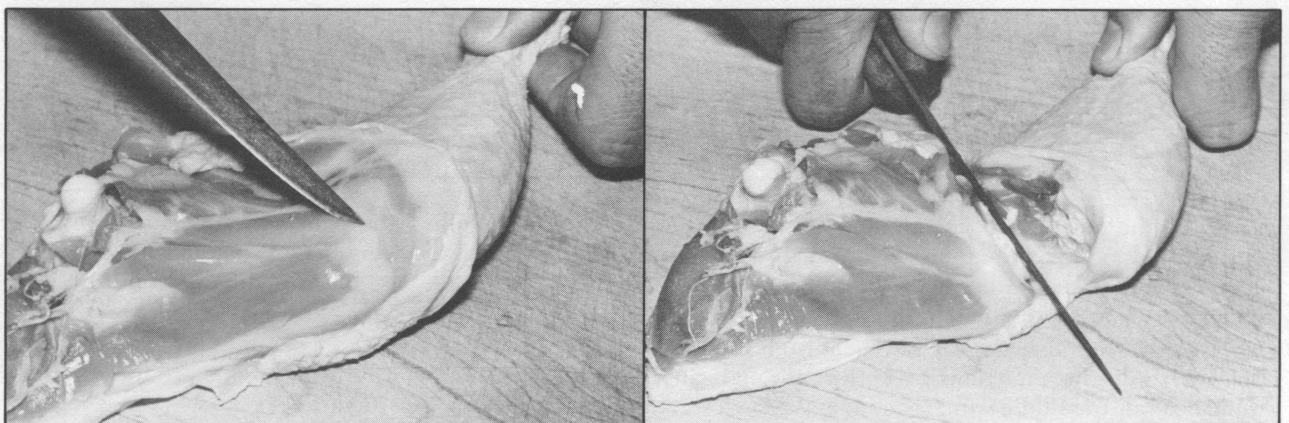
This cut can be angled to add meat from the breast onto the wing or from the wing onto the breast. Divide each wing into three sections by cutting through the remaining two joints of the wings. This produces a "baby drumstick" and a middle wing section, as well as a wing tip, which may be discarded.

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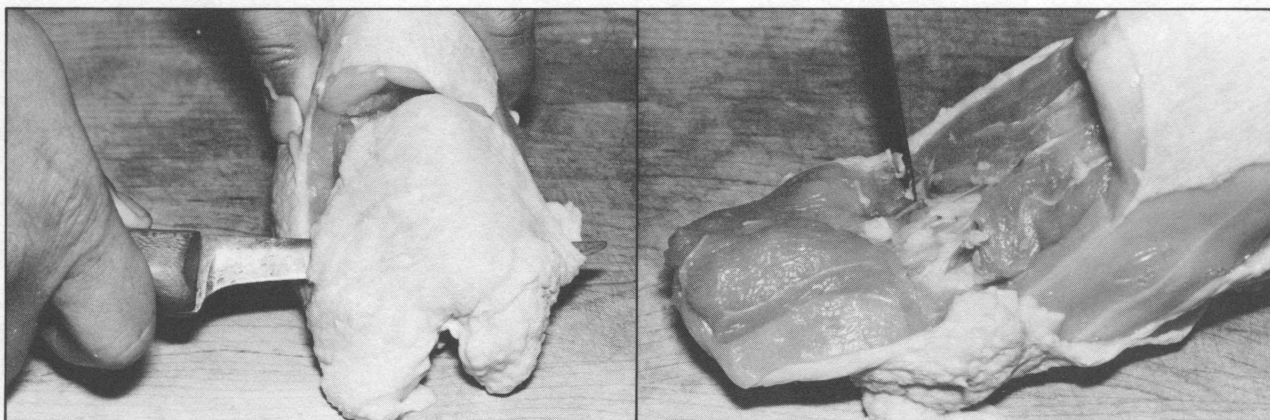


Remove the legs next. Turn the chicken on its back and point the head away from you. Slit the skin between the breast and each leg. Using both your hands, hold each leg with your thumb across the knee (the joint between the thigh and drumstick) and your fingers across the back of the hip joint. Force the legs back until the hip joints dislocate. Then completely cut through the meat and skin as close to the backbone as possible. Remove the second leg the same way.

To separate the drumstick and thigh, place the leg flat on the cutting board, skin side down. First find the line of fatty tissue that runs across the joint between them. Position the knife just to the drumstick side of the line. Cut through the tissue and into the joint. If the blade does not cut through the leg easily, simply move it slightly to the right or left and try again.

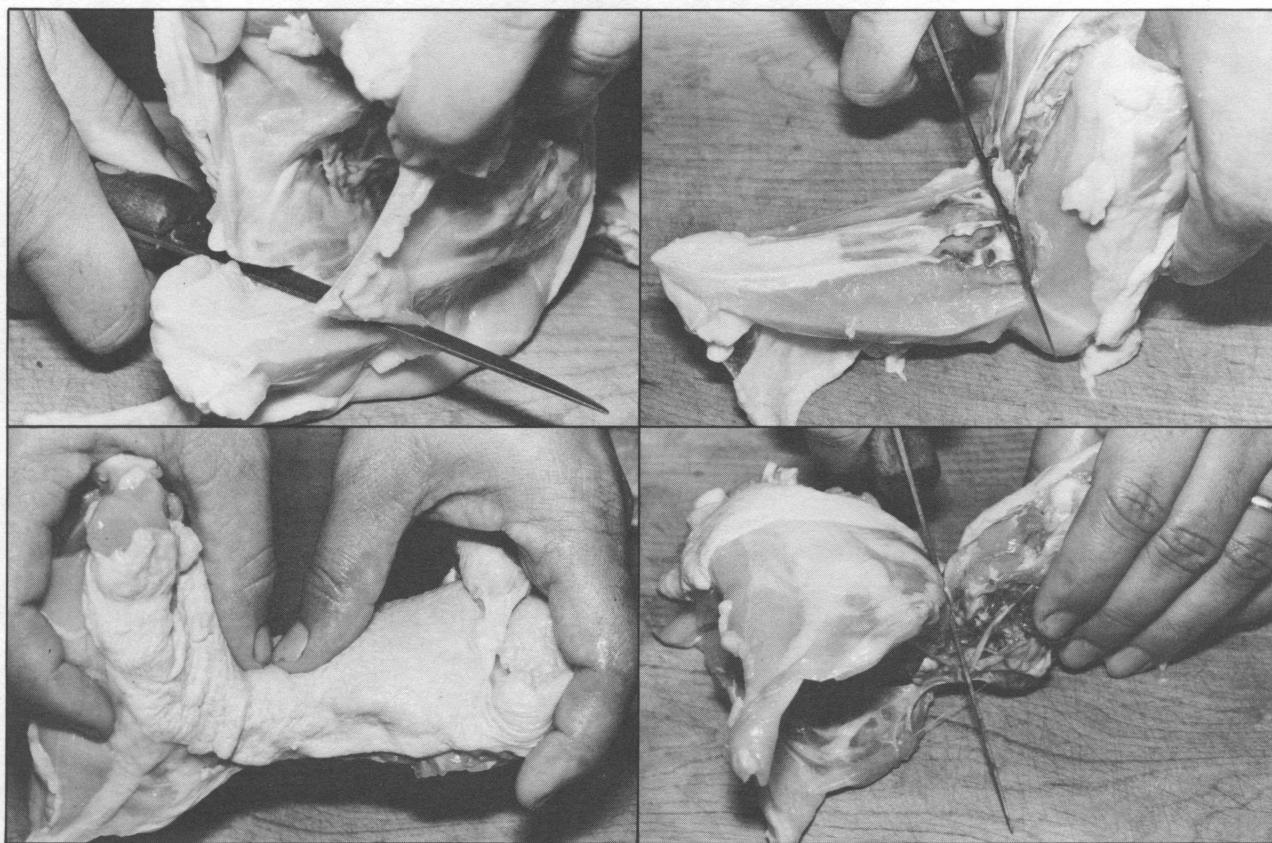


In the family style cut-up, the breast is divided into four pieces. Begin by cutting out the meaty pulley or wishbone piece. Place the knife across the carcass just in front of the point of the breastbone. Cut straight down until the knife hits bone. Then angle the blade toward the front of the breast and continue cutting through the meat. Use the collarbones as a guide to reach the joint of the pulley and collarbone. Then turn the cut section forward with the knife and cut through the joint.

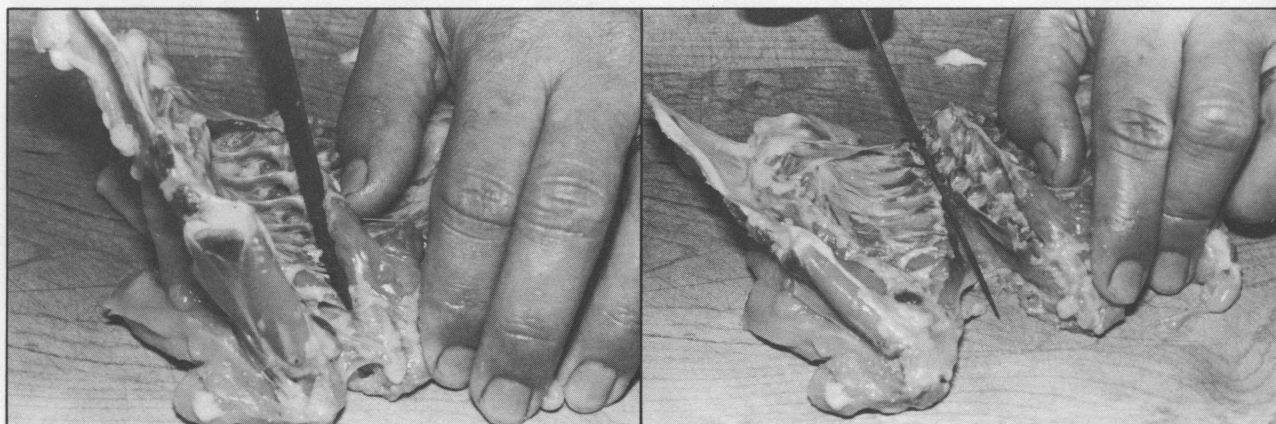


Hold the remaining carcass with the tail end up. Locate the two long bones that extend up from the point of the breast on either side. To remove the second breast portion, cut down along the breastbone side of the two bones. Cut through the cartilage at the point of the breastbone to separate the piece.

Next, separate the rib portion from the back. Place the carcass on its side and make a small cut on either side of the back just past the last rib. Using your hands, break the back at the nicks and separate the two pieces by cutting the remaining tissues.

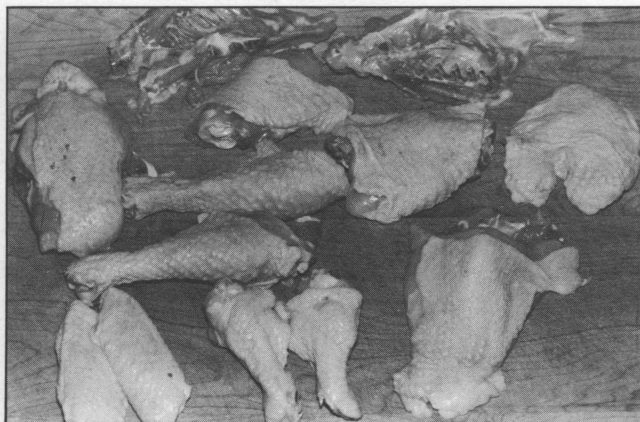


Lay the rib cage sections on the cutting board, back side down. Cut the white connective tissue between the rib sections. Then cut through the ribs along one or both sides of the backbone. This is the only place where bones may have to be cut. The cutting is easier if you can cut through the white cartilage where the ribs attach to the back.



If performed as described, the family style cut-up yields 13 usable pieces of chicken:

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 2 baby drumsticks<br>(upper portion of wing) | 1 pulleybone section    |
| 2 middle wing sections                       | 1 breastbone section    |
| 2 thighs                                     | 1 back section          |
| 2 drumsticks                                 | 2 rib (saddle) sections |



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