

# FACT SHEET

## CHICKEN CUT-UP: COMMERCIAL 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.

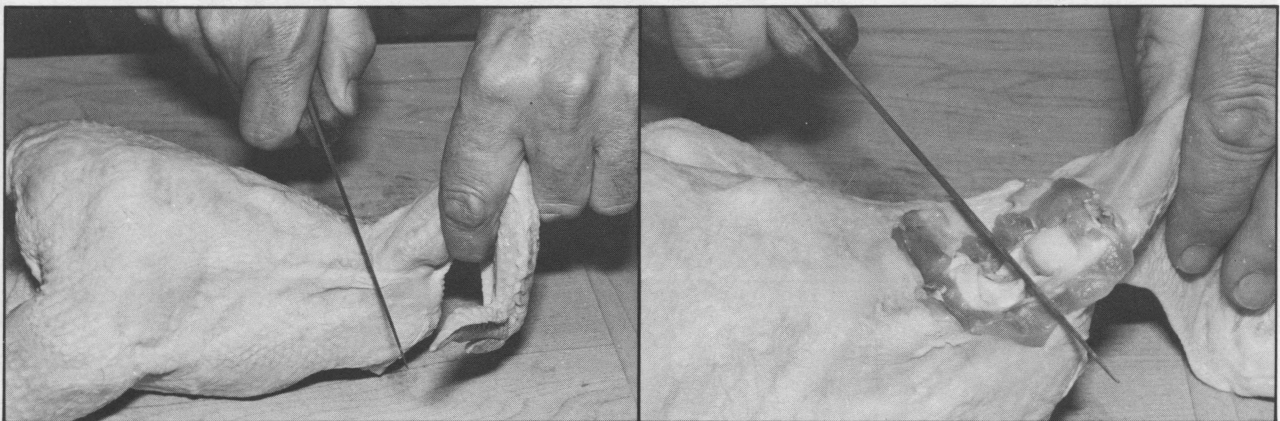
Chicken is often commercially packaged in pieces. It is less expensive, however, to buy a whole chicken and to cut it up yourself. That way you can buy several chickens when they are on special, disjoint and package them as your family prefers and freeze for future use. (See Extension publication B-177 *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. Refer to Extension publication L-1798 *Chicken Cut-up: Family Style* for step-by-step instructions.

The commercial type pieces are similar to those packaged in stores. These cuts are commercially advantageous because meat from the wing and back is included on high-priced breast and thigh sections.

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.

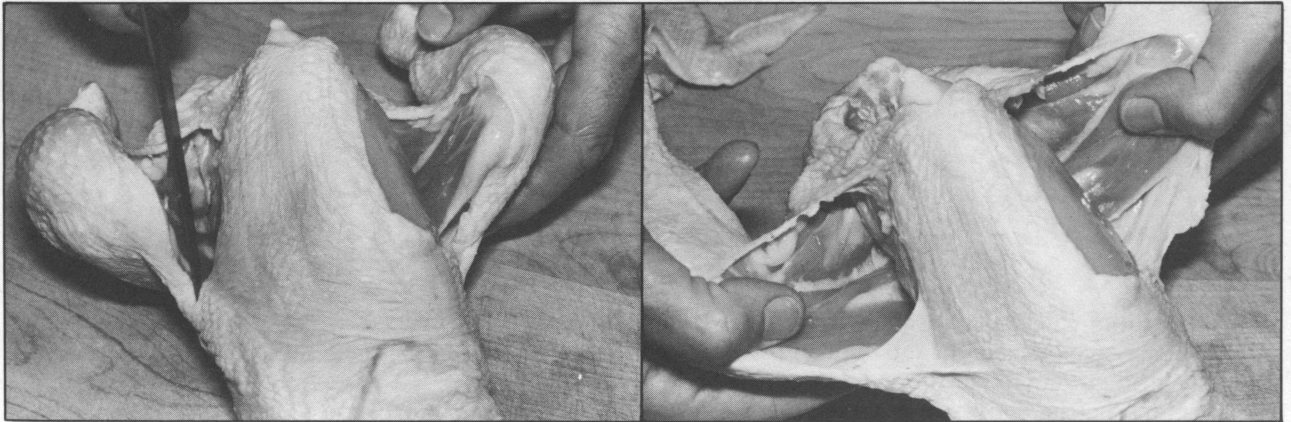


Place the chicken on its side and cut slowly into the wing pit. Pulling the wing upward, cut through the cartilage and joint. As the joint separates, turn the knife slightly toward the wing tip to avoid cutting the breast muscle. All cuts should be made gently so that if you accidentally hit a bone you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

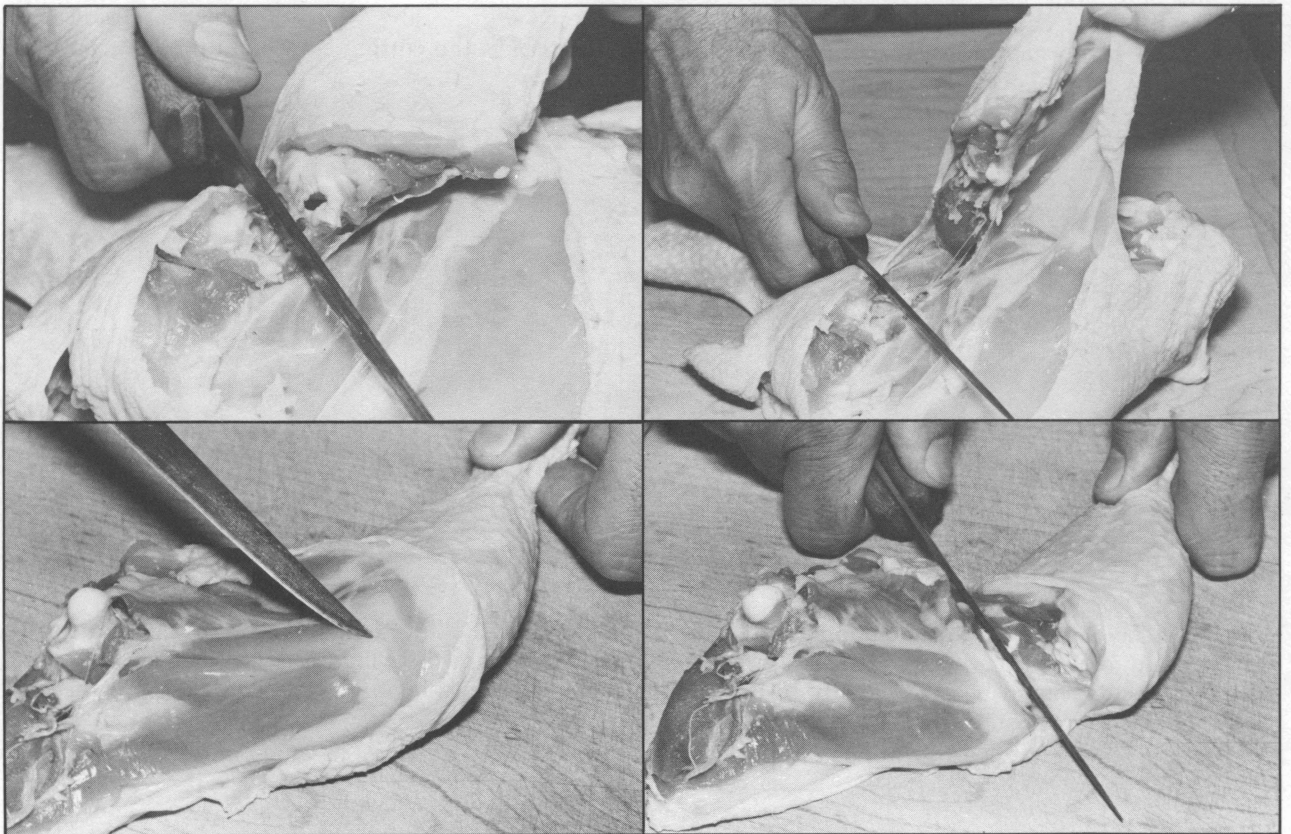
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Remove the legs next. Turn the chicken to its back and point the front end away from you. Slit the skin between the breast and each leg. Using both your hands, hold each leg with your thumb across the knee (the joint between the thigh and drumstick) and your fingers across the back of the hip joint. Force the legs back until the hip joints dislocate.



Next, cut from the back of the chicken as close to the backbone as possible until you *just* cut through the white cartilage of the hip joint. Then, use the knife to press the broiler to the cutting board and *pull* the leg away. Cut the remaining skin. Remove the second leg the same way.

Using this technique, the “oyster” or back muscle is pulled from the broiler and is included on the thigh piece.

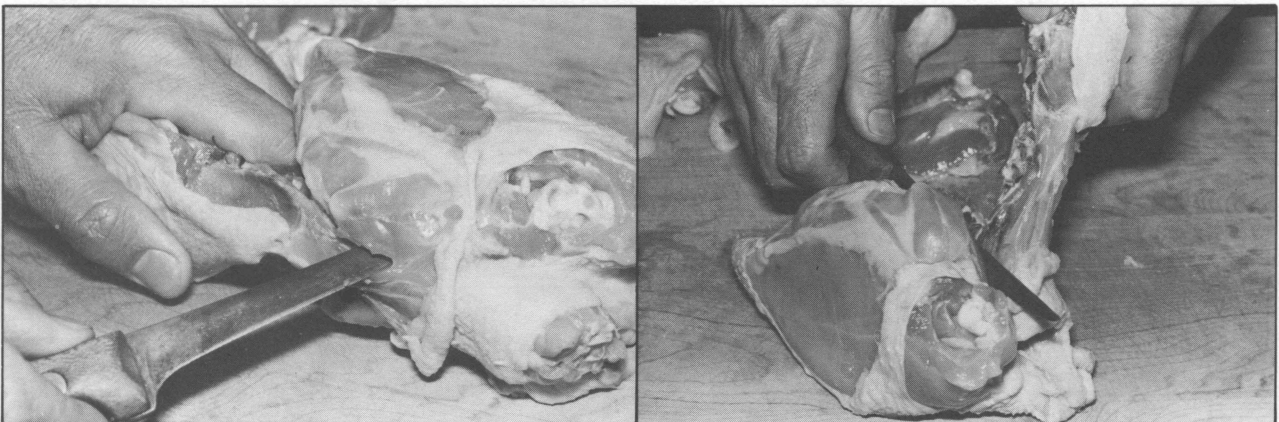


To separate the drumstick from the thigh, place the leg flat on the cutting board, skin side down. Find the line of fatty tissue that runs across the joint between the drumstick and thigh. Position the knife just to the drumstick side of the line. Then cut through the tissue and into the joint. If the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

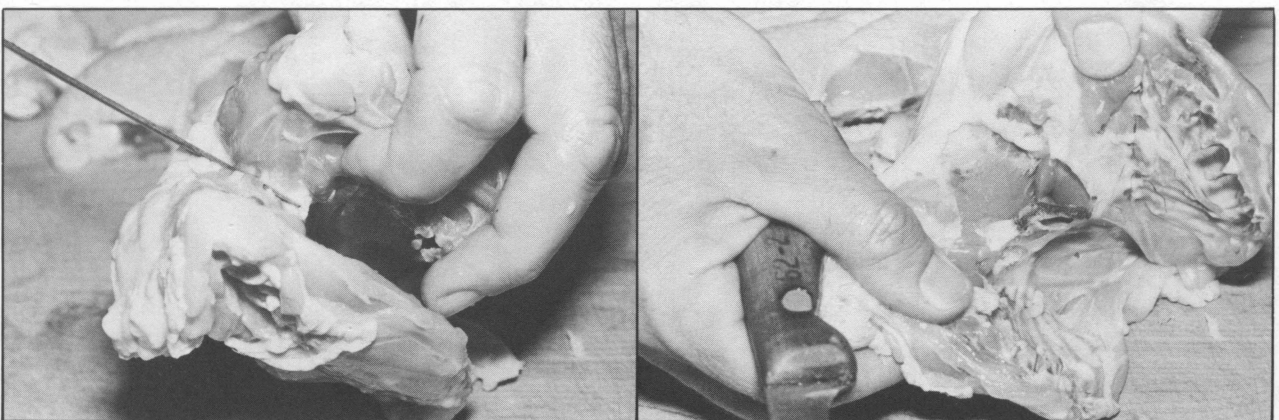
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In the commercial style cut-up, the breast is divided into two pieces. Begin by cutting the connective tissue behind the last rib on either side of the chicken. Insert the knife near the backbone after the last rib and slice outward.

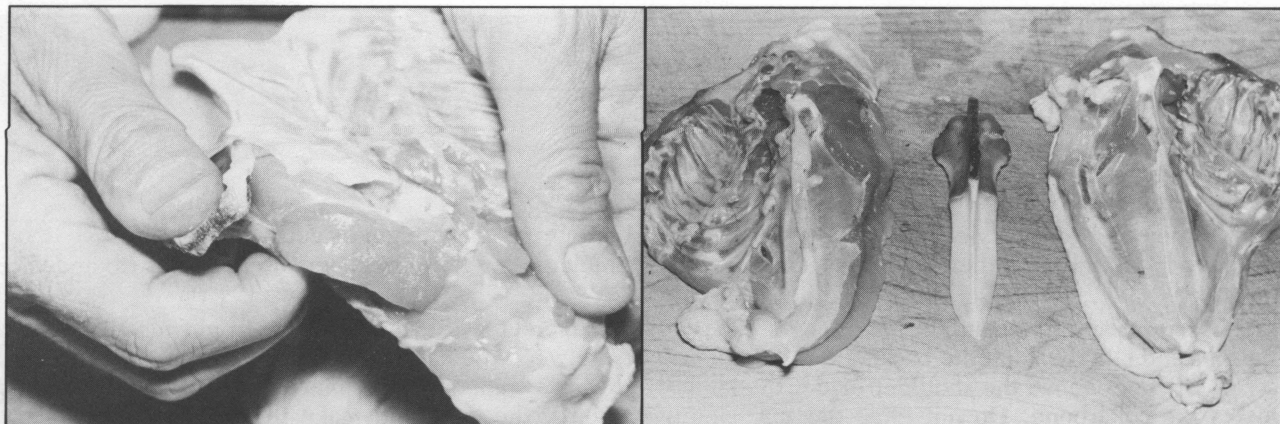
Then, place the remaining carcass on its side, with the tail end toward you. Cut away from yourself, through the ribs and closely along the backbone so the knife slices between the backbone and shoulder blade. If the cut accidentally goes above the shoulder blade, the knife will become trapped in the joint where the shoulder blade meets the collarbone. Do not force this cut; simply withdraw the knife and make the proper cut along the backbone. Turn the bird over and make the same cut on the other side. This cut is made most easily in the white cartilage area where the ribs join the back.



Hold the breast section with the front toward you. Cut the white cartilage at the top front of the breastbone. Pull the halves apart. The breastbone will stay attached to one side and the wishbone will break as the halves are pulled.



To remove the breastbone, hold it at the front end between your thumb and fingers. Press up with your fingers as you pull out with your thumb. The breastbone will snap out at the front and can be pulled out the rest of the way. If the small white cartilage area at the rear of breastbone does not come out, it should be removed by separately pulling it loose.

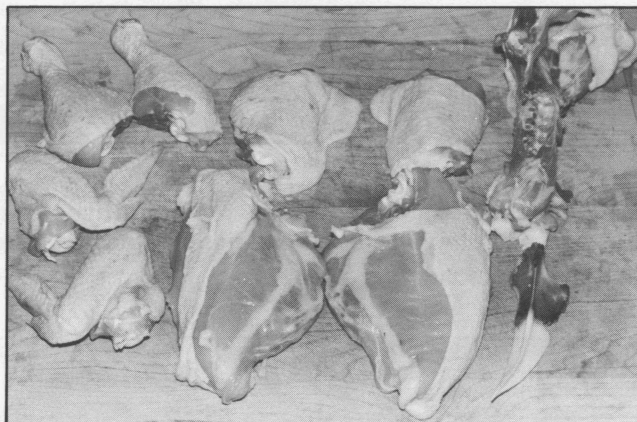


If performed as described, the commercial style cut-up yields eight usable pieces of chicken:

2 wings	2 thighs
2 drumsticks	2 breast halves

Variations can be made easily in the commercial method, according to your preference.

- Thighs do not have to be separated from drumsticks.
- Wings can be separated into three sections by cutting through all of the wing joints.
- Wings can be left attached to the carcass as a part of each breast portion.
- The two halves of the breast may be separated by cutting the soft breastbone down the middle.



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