

## The Rising Popularity of Chicken Meat

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**Received:** August 20, 2019; **Published:** September 01, 2019

Chicken meat is an excellent source of protein and when compared to other meat, has a lower amount of fat with a favorable ratio of saturated to unsaturated fatty acids, making it a healthier meat choice. Fat level varies with different cuts. Chicken skin is high in fat; hence, meat cuts eaten with skin off will have lower fat content. Breast meat, the predominant cut, which accounts for almost half of the meat on a chicken carcass, contains only 1.6% fat [1]. Chicken is a good source of minerals and essential vitamins, especially vitamin E and vitamin A. Iron and zinc contents in chicken are lower than in beef and lamb but, it has the highest amount of niacin among all meat. The recommended dietary intakes of niacin, an important nutrient for energy metabolism, can be met with 100 g of chicken meat per day for adults [2].

Being the cheapest of all livestock meat, chicken is an important source of high-quality protein in poor countries of Africa and South Asia where protein malnutrition is rampant and where traditional foods are typically rich in carbohydrate but low in protein [3]. A major advantage of chicken meat especially in developing countries like India is that there are no major taboos on its consumption. Moreover, poultry production has a less detrimental impact on the environment than other livestock and uses less water.

Livestock account for an estimated 18 percent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, mainly methane and nitrous oxide [4]. Chickens are inherently more efficient at converting feed into meat than other livestock species (To produce 1 kg of meat from a commercial broiler chicken only about 1.7 kg of feed is needed) [5].

Around the world, popularity of chicken meat is increasing to an extent that by 2021 it is predicted to overtake pork as the most widely eaten meat [6].

With the cost of red meat continuing to rise, chicken will soon become the staple meat in many households [7]. Poultry has become one of the fastest growing segments of the agricultural sector in India today. While the production of agricultural crops has been rising at a rate of 2.5 percent per annum, broiler production has been rising at a rate of 10-12 percent per annum. As a result, India is now the world's third-largest egg producer after China and USA and the fourth largest producer of broilers after China, Brazil, and the USA. Chicken is the most widely accepted meat in India. Unlike beef or pork, its consumption does not have a religious taboo. Moreover, chicken meat is more affordable than mutton or goat meat. Consumption of chicken in India has increased from 0.4 kg/person/year in 1990 to 2.5 kg/person/year in 2015.

In developed countries it is around 20 kg/person/year [8]. Processing of chicken meat has shot up from 1% in 1990 to 7% in 2015 [9]. It may not be a substantial increase but with rapid urbanization, improvements in equipment and machinery, availability of technically qualified skilled manpower, integrated production, good genetic stocks, the huge demand for Indian chicken products in foreign markets especially in the Middle East and investment in cold chain, this number is believed to increase in the coming years. The country has exported 5.45 lakh MT of Poultry products to the world for the worth of Rs. 687 crores during the year 2016-17 [9].

Thus, there lies immense scope for utilization of layer and broiler hens for products processing to benefit the producers and consumers in the country.

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**Volume 3 Issue 10 October 2019**

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