Ministry of Food Production
Extension Training and Information Services Division
FACT SHEET
TT:Ag Ext 00:12

by: Usam Stephen. Agricultural Officer 1

How To Prepare Ducks For The Market

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge about marketing is the farmer's first and final step in the production process. Ducks for market must be prepared to satisfy consumers' need and increase farmers' profits.

Preparing ducks for market involves handling, preparation for sale, killing, plucking, waxing, roasting or skinning, gutting, cooling and storage.

HANDLING

Use a poultry-catching hook to catch ducks for sale. Do not try to corner ducks in the dark since they can see very well and will try to avoid being caught. Cornering the ducks can make them scamper and bounce into obstacles causing bodily injury. This lowers the market value and can lead to rejection. The ducks also have sharp claws and can peck.

PREPARATION FOR SALE

Remove feed 4 - 6 hours before selling live ducks so that the live weight of ducks would not have to be adjusted for feed in the crop. If the ducks are to be sold to a processor, withdraw feed overnight.

SLAUGHTERING

Do all killings away from the view of other ducks. Ducks could be killed by stunning first, then slaughtering; or slaughtering at once. Slaughter the ducks by hanging them upside down in a funnel/cone and cutting the throat. Leave the duck to bleed for at least 5 minutes since the flesh quality would be impaired if the duck is not sufficiently bled.

Figure 1. Plucked ducks

PLUCKING

After the duck has been killed, first 'dry pick' to remove down feathers which will come off very easily. Then put the duck to scald in hot water of temperature 50° - 60° C for 1 - 3 minutes and 'wet pick'. Temperature can be increased as the bird gets older but the time left in the hot water should not be varied. Start removing the hardest feathers first, e.g., the wing and tail. Do not tear the skin in the process as this could affect the quality of the roasted duck (***figure 1***).

WAXING

Waxing can be done after plucking to remove hairs and pin feathers that are difficult to remove. Use hot paraffin wax in hot water. Dip the duck down completely, remove it and then dip it in cold water. Pull off the wax, removing the hairs/pin feathers with it.

ROASTING

As an alternative to waxing, the duck could be roasted after plucking to burn off the pin feathers (***figure 2***). The roasting process also gives a characteristic smoky flavor to the duck.

Figure 2. Roasted ducks

SKINNING

As an alternative to plucking, the duck can be skinned. Slit the skin from the neck along the breast and pull the skin away from the carcass. Skin the duck before gutting. A skinned duck is a much leaner duck than a plucked one and is usually done as a matter of personal preference. Remove the remaining contents with your hand.

GUTTING

Remove the head, feet and tail; then handpick any remaining feathers. Cut between the breast bone to avoid cutting the guts as this could lead to tainting of the flesh. Cut the skin above the crop. Remove the crop and the remaining contents with your hand.

COOLING

After gutting, thoroughly wash the duck in clean water. Then dip it in cold water of temperature 3° - 4° C to cool the carcass down rapidly as this improves its storage ability.

STORAGE

For storage periods of less than 24 hours, simply chill the duck in crushed ice. For longer storage time the ducks should be stored in the freezer. Wrap the duck in material which is waterproof, grease proof, odour proof, strong and easy to handle and can withstand low temperatures (***figure 3***). This is necessary to prevent dehydration and freezer burn.

Figure 3. Duck meat packaged for sale

For further information and advice contact your Extension Officer

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