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Poultry price forecast

Operators rely on chicken to keep center-of-the-plate food costs in check. But chicken's image as a "bargain" protein has been tarnished lately due to prolonged drought, high feed costs and increased food service demand. John Davie, president of Dining Alliance and Consolidated Concepts purchasing groups, shares the latest on chicken prices.

Whole chickens are **40 cents per pound** higher than in 2012, about **30%** more wholesale

Feed prices are starting to **drop** and chicken supply is **increasing** as producers are growing more birds

The price for **whole birds** should soften by the end of 2013

McDonald's is expected to buy **250 million** wings this fall, keeping wing prices high through the Super Bowl

Chicken sandwiches are popular in the chains, pushing up demand for **boneless breast meat**.

Breast prices will probably not come down until mid-2014

Foodservice Buyer

Super chicks

Some of the most renowned chefs are elevating one of the humblest birds—the chicken—to new heights. We're not talking fancy sauces, rare spices or hi-tech techniques; instead, these pros are turning to the simplest, most down-home cooking methods—frying and roasting. Thomas Keller of the French Laundry and Per Se, Daniel Humm of Eleven Madison Park and NoMad and Andrew Carmellini of The Dutch and Lafayette all have customers swooning over their signature roast or fried chicken.

Sourcing thoughtfully raised, all-natural chickens is a given for these signatures, but one purveyor has gone so far as to feed flocks on table scraps collected from those chefs' own kitchens. Green Circle chickens are raised in Pennsylvania by Ariane Daguin, founder of D'Artagnan, a purveyor of premium meat and poultry, and sold back to high-end restaurants. Daguin feels the table scrap diet will improve the flavor and texture of the birds.

Whether this pans out in the roasting pan is uncertain. What is certain is that chefs and customers expect more from



their chickens these days. These operators deliver.

Chicken Three Ways 676 Restaurant & Bar Chicago

"It's a testament to a chef's strength to make a unique, memorable chicken dish ... to take something that people wouldn't necessarily order and make it special," says Joshua Hasho, chef at this relaunched restaurant in the Omni Chicago Hotel. He was also looking for



CHICKEN THREE WAYS AS SERVED AT 676 RESTAURANT IN OMNI CHICAGO HOTEL

an item that struck a chord with patrons' childhoods. The result is Chicken Three Ways—one of Hasho's best-sellers.

He starts with a smaller 2- to 2 ½-pound chicken "because birds are most flavorful at this size," and works closely with Miller Farm in North Orland, Ind. to source an antibiotic-free product consistent in size and quality. "They raise the chickens indoors in large pens with natural lighting, feeding them corn, soybeans and the farm's own vitamins," Hasho explains.

To cook the chicken, the chef first removes the airline breast portion and brines it for eight hours in garlic, lemon, honey and thyme. Then it's air-dried and cooked sous vide to keep the breast moist, and seared to a crisp turn. Meanwhile, the drumstick is soaked in but-

MENU R&D

termilk, then coated with a tempura batter and dredged in cornflake crumbs—both gluten-free. The final component is a housemade chicken sausage ground from the giblets, thigh and neck meat; diced pumpkin and sage round out the flavor profile. The dish goes for \$24.

“Lemon and thyme are my favorite seasonings to pair with chicken,” says Hasho. “You can manipulate these two ingredients and just let the farmer’s hard work shine through. You don’t want to screw with that.”

Rotisserie Chicken

Modern Rotisserie Newton, Mass.

As part of the early culinary team at Boston Chicken, Marjorie Druker knows a thing or two about rotisserie cooking. When she opened Modern Rotisserie this year, she took that experience and tweaked it, creating her signature roast chicken.

“I reformulated the method and recipe to make it more magical,” says Druker. She first brines the chickens for 24 hours in a “secret recipe” based on apple-cider vinegar. Before

the bird is placed on the rotisserie it gets a second dip in the brine. “At Boston Chicken we also dipped twice,” explains Druker. But here’s where she deviates from the formula. “While the chicken cooks, we baste it continuously with the drippings—just as you would a Thanksgiving turkey,” she adds. “We also sprinkle on a ‘shake’ I created from a blend of spices.” After 2 ½ hours, a succulent, flavorful chicken emerges.

Technique and seasonings aside, “the top talent is the chicken itself,” claims Druker. She sources Murray’s chickens from Lancaster County Pennsylvania, where a collaborative of farms raises the birds. At \$14.95, this makes for a more expensive roast chicken than some other takeout rotisserie birds, but “it tastes different from the first bite,” Druker says.

Chicken Sandwich

Roadside Eats

Hollywood, Calif.

Sandwiches rule at this Southern-inspired fast-casual spot and chicken fills two of the most popular ones. “Chicken is always successful,” says Executive Chef and co-owner Dave Northrup. “It’s versatile and easy for people to understand. My goal with Roadside Eats was to swing back to simplicity; simple proteins and simple preps in a fast-casual setting.”

Recipes

Chefs are putting their signature on homespun chicken preparations, such as fried and roast chicken, and customers are flocking to order them. While these cooking methods are not that difficult to replicate at home, brining, marinating and customized seasonings elevate these restaurant chickens to a more flavorful and juicy level. Versatile chicken is also showing up in ethnic dishes and comfort food classics.

Since both Northrup and his chef have lived in the South, they knew they wanted to do a fried-chicken sandwich. “After fooling around with a lot of different batters and breadings, we created our own pecan flour,” he says. To intensify the pecan taste, the boneless chicken breast is brushed with a pecan-flavored egg wash before it’s dipped in the flour; a mustard-maple glaze completes the prep.

Barbecue is another Southern flavor profile that’s a natural fit for chicken. For Roadside



PECAN FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICH WITH
MUSTARD-MAPLE GLAZE

Eats’ rendition, Northrup brines the breast in salt and apple cider vinegar for 12 hours, then rubs it with garlic, cumin, coriander, onion powder and brown sugar. Next, it’s smoked over applewood for three hours. Once cooked, the chicken is chopped and finished with the house BBQ sauce—a vinegary-sweet blend. Both chicken sandwiches sell for \$7.50.

“These are the foods of my youth; the tastes that bring me back to my roots,” Northrup says.

—PATRICIA COBE



Oven-Fried Chicken

- 1 cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper, divided
- 4 chicken legs, skin removed
- 4 chicken thighs, skin removed
- ½ cup whole-wheat flour
- 1 ½ tsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- 1 tsp. baking powder

1. In large bowl, whisk together yogurt, mustard, garlic, 2 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Add chicken pieces; turn to coat in marinade. Cover and refrigerate at least 30 min. or up to 12 hrs.
 2. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Place a wire rack on top of baking sheet and lightly coat with nonstick cooking spray.
 3. In large plastic bag, combine flour, paprika, thyme, baking powder and remaining 1 tsp. salt and ½ tsp. pepper. Remove chicken from marinade; shake off excess and add a few pieces at a time to flour mixture. Shake to coat, shaking off excess flour.
 4. Place chicken on prepared rack. Lightly coat with nonstick cooking spray. Bake 50 to 60 min. until golden brown and internal temperature reaches 160°F.
- Yield: 4 servings



BIRDS TAKE A SPIN AT MODERN ROTISSERIE