

## How to joint a chicken

Contributed by Northern Lad

No excuse now not to get hold of a good bird and make the most of it, with Northern Lad's step by step guide to jointing a chicken.

Start with your full, intact chicken, and remove the giblets (if supplied). I used a 4-5lb chicken which breaks down into about 9 portions of meat. Aside from the skin, nothing need be wasted, so keep hold of the carcass and giblets.

To take off the legs, start by cutting through the skin between the breast and leg (fig 2) Cut all the way through until you get to the joint between the leg and the backbone of the bird. Repeat on the other side.

Now take the main part of the chicken between the legs and bend it back against itself (fig 3) You will probably hear a cracking sound once you take it far enough. Take your knife and separate the spine as shown. Cut through, and the back section will come away in one piece. You now have two halves of a chicken.

To take off the legs altogether, bend one of the legs back against the joint (fig 6). This will expose the thigh bone, making it easy to run the knife along the spine of the chicken and cut off the leg. Repeat with the other leg. It's now best to remove the knuckle from the leg. This is the hard bit at the end of the drumstick. If you flex the joint you should be able to find the centre of joint; open it up and run the knife through it. It should come off quite easily.

To split the legs, find the inside of the joint between the drumstick and thigh and run your knife through it. You should now be able to see the bones. Flexing the leg will allow you to see exactly where the joint is; find the joint and push down hard with your knife. This is not the sort of joint where you can cut through the bones. On a well raised, fed and looked-after bird the legs will be very strong and solid.

You will now have jointed half your bird. Now on to the top half. Start by cutting off the end of the wings. To remove the skin from the breast, make a small cut right at the top, releasing it from the meat and allowing you to get a good grip. Pull down the skin, helping it along with the knife where necessary. Now to removing the breasts.

There is a ridge of cartilage running down between the breasts; place the knife to one side of this and run it down all the way. Long strokes are best as they keep the meat in better pieces. Run the knife down against the bones whilst gently pulling away the meat. The breast, wing and body are all joined together at one point which you will find next to the wishbone. Pull the breast and wing away from the body and cut through this joint. This will release the breast and wing.

Repeat this for the other side. The joint between the wing and breast is easy to identify. Cut through it to release the wing. Well done, you have now jointed a whole chicken. That's not the end though. To make the portions more practical there are a few more steps.

Each breast will split down into two pieces. The breast is made up of two parts; a large outer part, and a smaller inner fillet. Run your finger under this and cut along the line of the joint. Also, the outer part is not a very even shape. Cutting off a piece about the same size and shape as the fillet will even it up. Put this piece with the fillet to make a good size portion.

To make the wings easier to eat it's a good idea to split them in two - these are known as buffalo wings. On a good chicken there is a surprising amount of meat, so don't discount them as worthless! That's it, you now have 9 portions of chicken from one bird. Along with the stock you can make from the bones and giblets this can easily make over 16 meals.