

The Active Consumer

Water In Chicken? That's Something To Squawk About

(NAPSA)—If you enjoy a good chicken dinner, you have plenty of company. Every year, each American consumes about 82 pounds of chicken. At home, that number is about 48 pounds a year. But something has begun to ruffle the feathers of chicken lovers. It's called "enhanced chicken."

By purchasing this altered chicken, many shoppers are paying for more than they realize—and it's turning out to be extra water, salt and phosphates. Labeled "enhanced with chicken broth," this processed poultry absorbs the liquid, which accounts for up to 15 percent of the product's weight, and could cost consumers, if all chicken were enhanced in this manner, an extra \$2.9 billion each year.

To make more consumers aware, Sanderson Farms, the nation's sixth largest chicken producer, today announced a consumer education initiative designed to shed light on what has become a common industry practice.

"Some of the largest chicken producers use this enhancing practice to increase the weight of the chicken and ultimately the consumer's cost," said Consumer Advocate Tim Duffy. "Families become the victims and could end up unwittingly paying about \$40 extra a year for nothing more than additional water, salt and phosphates, if they buy nothing but enhanced chicken."

How "Enhancement" Works

Chicken becomes "enhanced" when a solution of water, salt and phosphates is injected into the poultry meat with a cluster of needles. Another method is called "tumbling," where the product and solution are put in a large drum and the air removed to create a vacuum that forces the liquid into the meat. Either way, the end chicken product is pumped with

Enhanced Chicken and Water

- Number of ounces of water in one pound of enhanced chicken—2.1 oz.
- Annual amount consumers pay extra per person for water in enhanced chicken—\$10.20
- Annual amount consumers pay extra for a family of four for water in enhanced chicken—\$40.80
- Annual amount the population of the United States pays for water in enhanced chicken—\$2.9 billion



up to 15 percent solution—paid for by consumers.

The Secret Sodium Source

Another surprising effect of this process is the increase in sodium in "enhanced" chicken. Nutritional labeling shows that sodium in "enhanced" chicken can be as high as 540 mg. in one 4-ounce piece, whereas a natural, raw 4-ounce chicken breast contains 73 mg. sodium. The recommended USDA dietary guidelines for sodium intake in healthy adults is no more than 2,400 mg. per day. Those on restricted diets should consume even less—no more than 2,000 mg. per day.

All Chicken Is Not Created Equal

One chicken producer, Sanderson Farms, is dedicated to producing 100 percent chicken, naturally and does not add unnecessary water, salt and phosphates to increase the weight of its Sanderson Farms brand of fresh chicken.

"We urge shoppers to take an extra second to check the label on the front of the package, read the fine print on the back and look for words like 'enhanced,' 'chicken broth,' or 'solution,'" said Bill Sanderson of Sanderson Farms natural chicken products. For more information, please visit www.truth-in-chicken.com.