



## Finally you have decided to cook hen!

### Problem

After the laying period hens have limited value and producers have to dispose of them at a substantial cost. As the depopulation of the poultry shed is both hard work and constitutes a cost for the farmer, investments to improve hen welfare in this part of the production chain are challenging. If the birds had a higher financial value and were viewed as a resource also after the laying period they would be potentially handled more carefully and procedures around them being sent to slaughter could be optimized to increase quality, instead of the current aim to only reduce costs. An increased use of hen meat would also be more environmentally sustainable, as a large amount of hen meat today is simply destroyed and not consumed. A higher appreciation and value of the meat would therefore be relevant.

### Solution

Laying hens are mainly sold as whole birds deep frozen. They are often marketed along with frozen turkeys, ducks and broilers and are thereby generally overlooked, not least due to their small size.

A set of recipes was developed by a Swedish celebrity chef to inspire the Swedish food industry and consumers to use hen meat as a potentially viable source of meat for consumption. Hen meat provides a tasty, sustainable, safe and cheap food item.



Hen fajitas

### Application box

**Theme:** Depopulating

**Production system:** All laying hen systems

**Stock:** End-of-Lay hens

**Equipment:** Basic kitchen equipment



Hen curry and Peking hen

### Benefit – outcome

- Increased value of End-of-Lay hen meat.
- Potential for better handling and slaughter procedures
- Increased environmentally sustainable, as a large amount of hen meat is currently destroyed and not consumed.
- A delicious, tasty and cheap source of meat.

## Practical recommendation

- Turn on the oven to a low medium temperature (140-150 degrees C, gas mark 4)
- Rub the hens with fresh or dried herbs e.g. basil, thyme, pressed garlic, rosemary, tarragon or whatever you've got. Squeeze the lemons and pour the juice or white wine on the hen - if using lemon, add the squeezed lemon halves to the roasting pan/dish with the hen (put a lid on the casserole or some tin foil to make sure the hen does not dry in the oven).
- Put the defrosted hen in a low temperature oven. Turn and baste the birds now and then, maybe twice an hour. Cook for around 3 hours. The hens are properly cooked when the wing or leg comes off easily. If not – turn the oven off and leave the hens there for 1 h.
- Take out the hen when ready and place a damp cloth on it. Let it cool for 20 minutes.
- You may serve the whole birds and let the guests take the meat off themselves.

Or make...

**Hen curry:** Pick the meat from the bones. Take some of the broth, let it cool and remove the fat before using it. In a frying pan gently fry in a little vegetable oil some diced yellow (or white) onions and various root vegetables to your preference with curry paste or powder. Add sufficient broth and cream (around 40% broth and 60% cream) to cover the chicken (see photo), bring to the boil, taste it and add more spices and seasoning if needed.

**Hen Fajitas:** Use common wheat tortillas. Pick the meat off the bones and pull/chop into small pieces. Fry as much onion, paprika and haricots verts as you like in a little oil, add a tasty tomato sauce (Mexican inspiration, preferably a bit sweet), stir in the hen meat. Prepare a cold cheese sauce, maybe 1-2 dl per fajita; stir crème fraîche, cream and grated strong tasting hard cheese.

Fill the bread with the hen stew, roll up and place in an oven proof dish, pour on plenty of the cheese sauce. Cook in the oven 150 degrees for around 35 minutes.

## Points to consider

1. One hen is sufficient for two portions.
2. To cook hen takes time, however the preparation time is short and you can be doing other things whilst the hens cook, filling the kitchen with a mouth-watering aroma and looking forward to a meal with a lovely taste and juicy meat.

## Further information

If you have any specific question about this technical note, please contact the author of by email:

Jenny Yngvesson at [Jenny.Yngvesson@slu.se](mailto:Jenny.Yngvesson@slu.se)

For more recipes <http://www.connyskalaskok.se/>

For more information please have a look at video on the Hennovation Youtube Channel on the use of hen meat.

## About this technical note and the Hennovation project

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**Hennovation project:** This technical note was developed as part of the Hennovation project. The project ran from January 2015 to August 2017. The project enabled practice-driven innovation through the establishment of innovation networks of farmers and within the laying hen production industry that were facilitated to proactively search for, share and use new ideas to improve hen welfare, efficiency and sustainability.

**Project website:** [www.hennovation.eu](http://www.hennovation.eu)

**Project partners:**

- Wageningen Livestock Research, The Netherlands
- School of Veterinary Science, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain.
- RSK ADAS UK Ltd, Wolverhampton, United Kingdom
- Department of Veterinary Public Health & Animal Welfare, University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno, Czech Republic
- Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences Department of Animal Environment and Health, Sweden
- College of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Exeter, United Kingdom
- Bristol Veterinary School, University of Bristol, United Kingdom.

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