



ORGANIC

WHAT DOES THE ORGANIC LABEL TELL ME ABOUT MY CHICKEN? IS IT SAFER, OR MORE NUTRITIOUS?

According to the USDA, the organic label does not indicate that the product has safety, quality or nutritional attributes that are any higher than conventionally raised product.

The USDA requires that any product carrying the USDA Certified Organic seal, including poultry products, must **meet the following guidelines** set by the USDA's National Organic Standards Board:

- The chicken may not have **antibiotics** or hormones administered. Note: by law, no chicken you eat, organic or not, is given added hormones or steroids.
- The chicken must have been fed 100% organic feed and forage, including organic grains.
- The chicken must have had a degree of access to the outdoors.

Once the chicken goes to the processing plant, most of the practices are the same for chickens raised organically or conventionally. The major difference is that in processing chicken that is labeled organic, any processing aids or sanitizers used must also be approved for organic use.

WHY ARE PROCESSING AIDS AND SANITIZERS USED AT ALL?

Processing aids are substances approved by both the FDA and USDA to enhance food safety and reduce potential contamination during processing. One example is antimicrobials, which are commonly used in poultry processing. Food-grade antimicrobials, not to be confused with antibiotics, work to kill bacteria and foodborne pathogens like **salmonella**. If an antimicrobial is used, it is used at the levels determined by the USDA, which require substantial dilution.

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

If you're curious about what other labels you might find on packages of chicken meat, check out this [infographic on common chicken labeling terms](#).

To learn more about the USDA's Organic seal, visit www.usda.gov.



ROOST ROSTER
A glossary of chicken meat and food label terminology

The U.S. Department of Agriculture regulates and oversees the language on meat and poultry labels. Here are some terms commonly found on chicken packaging.

<p>All-Vegetable or Vegetarian Diet</p> <p>Most poultry fed is made from corn and soybean meal, but sometimes also contains meat and poultry by-products. Healthful, natural and pesticide-free. If the feed does not contain any of these products, it can be labeled "All-Vegetable Diet" or "Vegete-Fed."</p>	<p>Farm-Raised</p> <p>All chickens raised in the U.S. are farm-raised in spacious barns equipped with temperature controls, clean feeding and water systems, and protection from any predators or external elements that could affect the health of the chickens.</p>	<p>Organic</p> <p>Products carrying the "USDA Certified Organic" seal (regulated by USDA) mean the chicken has been fed only certified organic feed (corn and soybeans). The chicken is also not given antibiotics — though it may have been vaccinated against common diseases. Most of the processing practices are the same for chickens raised organically and conventionally. The Organic label does not indicate that the product's safety, quality or nutritional attributes are any higher than the conventionally raised product.</p>
<p>Antibiotics Claims</p> <p>All chicken you buy is necessarily antibiotic-free — federal rules state that if any antibiotics are required, they must have cleared the bird's system before they can leave the farm. Some chickens are raised without the use of antibiotics. In the store, these hidden packages may be labeled a number of different ways including "No Antibiotics Ever," "Raised Without Antibiotics" or similar terms.</p>	<p>Free-Range</p> <p>Generally, "free-range" is included on a label when the chicken has access to the outdoors. Not all free-range chicken is organic, but all organic chicken is free-range.</p>	<p>Pasture-Raised</p> <p>Chickens that are primarily raised on pasture.</p>
<p>Cage Free</p> <p>Chickens are raised in large, open barns. In all chicken you buy from a store is raised cage-free, whether it's labeled cage-free or not.</p>	<p>Fresh</p> <p>"Fresh" means the temperature of whole poultry and cuts have never fallen below 26°F (the temperature at which poultry freezes, unlike water).</p>	<p>Retained Water</p> <p>A "retained water" statement, such as "May contain up to 2% retained water" or "Less than 4% retained water," is often found on packages of fresh poultry. USDA does not allow retention of moisture in meat and poultry, except for any chilling procedures, such as chilling processing chickens in ice-cold water to keep them cool and slow the growth of any spoilage bacteria. If any moisture is retained by the chicken after these steps, it must be stated on the label.</p>
<p>Broiler</p> <p>A young chicken raised for meat. This is the most common found in your grocery.</p>	<p>Hatched, Raised and Processed in the USA</p> <p>More than 90% of chicken sold in the U.S. comes from chickens hatched, raised and processed in the U.S. The only exception is a very small amount imported from Chile and Canada, which have food safety and quality standards equal to our own.</p>	<p>Roaster</p> <p>A larger chicken of 5 lbs. or more and less than 12 weeks of age.</p>
<p>Corish Hen</p> <p>A small broiler chicken harvested at a young age. It is not a game bird (such as a bird hunted for sport or food).</p>	<p>Natural</p> <p>Under USDA regulations, a "natural" product has no artificial ingredients, coloring, preservatives, or chemical preservatives, and is minimally processed.</p>	<p>USDA Processed Verified</p> <p>Companies with approved USDA Process Verified Programs are able to make marketing claims associated with their processing verified, including age, source, feeding practices, or other raising and processing claims and market themselves as "USDA Process Verified." Process Verified means that a company has been evaluated and verified by the USDA in these areas.</p>
<p>Dark Meat</p> <p>The back half of the chicken, the legs (drumsticks) and thighs.</p>	<p>No Added Hormones or Steroids</p> <p>Despite this label appearing on many chicken products found in the store, no chicken you buy is ever given added hormones or steroids. In fact, the use of such added or artificial hormones is forbidden by law by the FDA and has never been on the label.</p>	<p>White Meat</p> <p>The breast, tender and wing of the chicken.</p>
<p>Enhanced</p> <p>A chicken product has been "enhanced" if it contains an added ingredient or ingredients for flavor, which typically include water, salt, sugar, chicken broth or seasonings, like garlic. If a product is enhanced, it must clearly say so on the front of the package, along with a list of every ingredient and how much of it was used.</p>		