

## ROASTING AND BAKING

The general procedures for roasting and baking are explained in detail in Chapter 15. Review pages 421 and 476 for a discussion of low-temperature roasting. However, there are some differences in the ways poultry items are handled. The guidelines below should be observed.

Remember that poultry items are almost always cooked well done (except for squab and game birds).

Please note that the core recipe for roast chicken is found in Chapter 15 following the basic roasting procedure.

### SEASONING AND BASTING

1. Seasonings and, if desired, a little mirepoix or a bouquet garni should be placed inside the cavity. When roasting whole birds, you need to season the skin only if it is to be served and eaten, as the seasonings will not penetrate the skin.
2. Oil the skin before roasting to help in browning and to protect against drying. The skin may be basted with fat during roasting.

Basting is beneficial for large turkeys, which must be subjected to dry heat for several hours. If you baste large poultry during roasting, do it every 20–30 minutes. More frequent basting results in the loss of a great deal of heat from the oven because the door is opened so often.

3. Basting is unnecessary for duck and goose, which have a great deal of fat under the skin. These birds are usually roasted breast up for that reason.

### TEMPERATURE

Selection of roasting temperature depends on the product being roasted.

1. **Low-temperature roasting** is best for large items such as turkeys and capons. It results in a tender, juicy product. Review pages 421 and 476 for a discussion of low-temperature roasting.

Large turkeys may be roasted at 250°–325°F (120°–165°C). For most operations, however, cooking times at the lower end of this range are too long. In addition, if a turkey is stuffed (pp. 591–592), it is not advisable to roast it at a very low temperature because the interior temperature will take too long to rise, providing a good breeding ground for bacteria.

Some recipes call for starting large turkeys at a high temperature for 15–30 minutes in order to brown them. This is usually not necessary because they will likely brown anyway during the long cooking time.

Smaller items, such as roasting chickens, are usually roasted at 325°–375°F (165°–190°C). Small items roasted at low temperatures may not brown well by the time they are done. In such cases, the heat can be turned up for a few minutes when they are almost done in order to brown them.

2. The **searing** method may be used for chickens under 5 pounds (2 kg) and for baked chicken parts. Start roasting in the oven at 450°F (230°C) for 15 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 250°–325°F (120°–160°C). These small items cook so quickly that continuous roasting at a low temperature produces very little browning.

Ducks and geese also may be started at a high temperature in order to melt off some of the heavy fat layer under the skin and to make the skin brown and crisp.

3. **High-temperature roasting** is used for small items such as squab and game birds, which are often served rare. Cornish hens and other small poultry under 3 pounds (1.35 kg) may also be flash-roasted. Great care is necessary when roasting at high temperature, however, because the poultry will quickly become overcooked if left in the oven only a few minutes too long. For example, a 2½-pound (1.2-kg) chicken or guinea hen roasted at 450°F (230°C) may be perfectly cooked and nicely browned after 45 minutes but overcooked and dry if left another 10 minutes.

Ducks may also be roasted at a continuously high temperature (400°–425°F/200°–220°C) because their fat content protects them from drying. Great care should be used to prevent overcooking, however, because this can happen very quickly at these temperatures. (Goose should not be roasted at a continuously high temperature because of its larger size and the length of time it takes to cook.)

## BAKED POULTRY

Roasting and baking are the same process. Cutting up the chicken doesn't change the cooking method. Baked chicken or turkey parts are treated like roasted poultry.

Chicken parts are sometimes coated with seasoned crumbs or flour and rolled in fat before baking. Such products are sometimes misleadingly called oven-fried because of their resemblance to breaded fried chicken.

## POÊLÉS

A *poêlé* (pwah lay) is a classical preparation for white meats and poultry in which the item is cooked with a matignon (see sidebar, p. 558) in a covered container and basted with butter before and during cooking. Because the container is covered, the procedure is not a dry-heat method and, therefore, is not a genuine roasting procedure. Nevertheless, *poêlé* is usually translated as "butter-roasting" and is traditionally discussed along with other roasting procedures. (Escoffier also refers to a *poêlé* as a roast.) In this book, we follow this tradition and include the method here rather than with moist-heat procedures.

The recipe on page 558 illustrates the classical procedure for a *poêlé*, following Escoffier's method. Several alternatives to this procedure are indicated in the recipe notes and the sidebar on page 558.

## SMOKE-ROASTING

Rangetop smoke-roasting, also called pan-smoking, is a procedure done in a closed container, using wood chips to make smoke. You can use this procedure not only for small, tender, quick-cooking poultry and meat items, but also for fish fillets and some vegetables. A recipe for pan-smoked chicken breast is on page 555.

### THE POÊLE

The term *poêlé* is derived from the word for a type of cooking utensil, the *poêle* (pwahl). At one time, this term was used for the kind of covered casserole used to cook meats and poultry by the method described in the text. In French kitchens today, however, the *poêle* is a type of sauté pan or frying pan. Consequently, in modern French, the verb *poêler* usually means "to sauté or pan-fry."

In this text, as in most English-speaking kitchens, we use the word *poêlé* to refer to the classical procedure described in the text. To avoid confusion, however, it is helpful to be aware of how the word is used in modern French. In fact, many familiar cooking terms have slightly different meanings in French. For example, *casserole*, a term used in the preceding paragraph, refers in French to what we would call a saucepan.

## BASIC PROCEDURE Rangetop Smoke-Roasting

1. Collect all equipment and food supplies.
2. Place a layer of fine hardwood chips or shavings on the bottom of a hotel pan (Fig. 19.1). Disposable pans may be used for light smoking.
3. Place a rack in the pan over the chips and lay the seasoned food items on the rack. Cover tightly with a second hotel pan or with aluminum foil.
4. Place on the cooktop (making sure the ventilating hood is on!) over moderate heat. Smoke will begin rising from the wood chips.
5. After about 5 minutes, remove the food items from the smoke-roaster and, if necessary, complete the cooking in the oven. Leaving the food in the smoke too long results in a strong, bitter taste.

FIGURE 19.1 Rangetop smoke-roasting



(a) Place hardwood chips or sawdust in a disposable hotel pan. Place over moderately high heat and heat until the wood begins to smoke.



(b) Place the items to be cooked on a rack and set the rack over the chips so the food is not touching the chips. Cover tightly with another pan and cook for the desired time.