

PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC & GREEN BUILDING PROJECT



SUSTAINABLE FARMING : MEAT CHICKENS FOR SALE

PLEASE NOTE:

Everything included in "Sustainable Farming : Meat Chickens for Sale" has been transposed directly from the website. That includes references to the PlayHaven Farm LLC and Green Building Project (PHF&GBP) website pages, external websites, links to documents, etc. Because of how quickly things change on the internet, there are NO links from this document.

MEAT CHICKENS ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE AS OF SEPTEMBER 2015

I have created this archived PDF of the page from the website for the information you can glean from it about how I sold my meat chickens. ***The venture was HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL in that the demand for these chickens was always more than the supply.*** I stopped having poultry on the farm for personal reasons only.

I had hoped to have a new resource to refer ya'll to, but that has not occurred as of this date.

IF YOU ARE A FARMER IN THE KANSAS CITY METRO AREA AND ARE INTERESTED IN TAKING OVER MY OPERATION, PLEASE CONTACT ME!

In addition to being a Heritage Breed (Dark Cornish), what sets my meat birds apart from the rest is how they live. At PlayHaven Farm all my livestock live on pasture; which means the meat birds feast on insects and choice grasses, clover and other plant tidbits with plenty of clean water. PLUS I feed them only the best non-GMO seed possible, excluding corn, soy and wheat.

***Let me say that again... my meat birds eat absolutely
** NO CORN ** NO SOY ** NO WHEAT ** ever, period.***

And because I believe in full disclosure you should know that the chicks that become my meat birds are fed a commercial chick starter for about the first six (6) weeks of their lives and it does contain corn. After they move to pasture from the brooding house, they get only small grains including sunflower seeds, whole oats, and milo.



I do this because I am DEVOTED to providing my customers the healthiest and tastiest chicken meat possible and (sadly) this way of feeding costs at least twice as much as pastured meat birds fed a corn diet and as much as four (4) times the amount to feed chickens with corn-based feed in a confinement house or chicken yard.

All this quality of life and healthy food boils down to a higher price for meat birds. You simply cannot find the type of chicken I sell in a grocery store... at least none in the Kansas City area.

Here is an article I found via the internet that have some great information about the healthy aspects of 'corn-free' chicken and their eggs:

- "The Disadvantages of Corn-fed Chicken" by Sirah Dubois; 7-6-12 at <http://www.livestrong.com/article/557705-the-disadvantages-of-corn-fed-chicken/#ixzz2TOojCCmG>

It is important to cook Heritage Breeds correctly to get the best results. Attached is a PDF provided by the ALBC about cooking Heritage Breed Chickens.

I started this chicken adventure in 2012 and there two (2) archived PDFs in the General Store.

CHICKEN ADVENTURES, VOL. 1

- Getting Into Pastured Poultry (Mar 2012)
- Chicks (May 2012)
- 10-Days Old (May 2012)
- The Chickens Have Left the Building! (Jun 2012)
- Moved to the Chicken Tractor (Jun 2012)
- Added Independence (Jul 2012)
- Growing Up (Aug 2012)
- Coming Down to the Wire for the Boys (Aug 2012)
- I Feed the Chickens, the Chickens Feed Me (Oct 2012)
- Extra Photos (Oct 2012)
- From Pasture to Freezer (Oct 2012)
- It's All About the Hens! (Oct 2012)
- Sunny-side Up, Please (Oct 2012)
- Adding Light to the Situation (Nov 2012)
- B-B-B-BRRRR! (Dec 2012)
- Winter Hens (Jan 2013)
- Spring Equinox (Mar 2013)

CHICKEN ADVENTURES, VOL. 2

- May Day (May 2013)
- Mother and Child Reunion... Well, Sort of (May 2013)
- Processing Chickens (Aug/Sep 2013)
- A Rooster in the Hen House??? (Nov 2013)
- Overwinter Pasture (Jan 2014)
- Bah-Humbug-Chicken Style (Feb 2014)
- Another Polar Vortex in March... In Like a Lion (Mar 2014)
- New Homes All Around (May 2014)
- Freedom Rangers, Dark Cornish, Turkeys, Egg Layers, OH MY! (Jul 2014)
- Feeding Japanese Beetles (Nov 2014)
- The Turkeys (Nov 2014)
- Chicken Processing (Nov 2014)
- Overwintering Setup (Nov 2014)
- Phaerghus Meets the Chickens (Dec 2014)
- From Winter to Summer Pasture (Apr 2015)
- The Chicks Have Left the Building (Jul 2015)
- A Difficult Decision (Oct 2015)
- The Last Update on Poultry (Jan 2016)

HOW TO BUY PLAYHAVEN FARM LLC'S MEAT BIRDS

Basically, you are ordering a live chicken and I am providing processing at no additional charge. If you prefer to take your chickens home live, you will need to let me know ahead of time so I can have them waiting for you and you will need to provide adequate transportation containment yourself.

Meat chickens are ONLY sold through subscription/pre-orders at \$15.00/chicken and orders must be received prior to processing with a deposit that is half of the total. To get on the email list to get the Annual Newsletter and Order Form, contact me using the information on the website.

As you may have read (it's on the Previously page, the 9-12-14 status), I was VERY frustrated by customer interactions regarding the meat chickens in 2014 and had decided to NOT sell meat chickens in 2015 unless I could fix the problems.

Well, I believe I have come up with solutions that will allow me to continue raising meat chickens.

To purchase meat chickens from PlayHaven Farm requires two (2) commitments in addition to monetary payment:

1. Attend and help on at least one (1) processing morning.
2. Pick up your vacuum packed chickens at the scheduled date and time.

These are not unusual requests. Many CSA programs require their customers to work on the farm for a set number of hours during the season as part of their commitment to supporting the local farmer; while also requiring the customer pick up their produce at set times and places.

There are no exceptions to these requirements; however, you may send someone else in your place. **If you order chickens, but do not fulfill your obligations; you will forfeit your chicken order and any money already paid.**

Processing dates and pickup dates will be pre-determined and listed on the order form so that you can choose the date you will help and the date you will pick up.* **They will not be the same date**, so you are committing to come to the farm twice: once to help with processing (in the morning) and once to pick up your chickens (in the late afternoon/evening).

*A limited number of chickens will be processed on each processing date. In the event that the date you have chosen has already been filled by other customers, you will be given the choice of choosing a different date or cancelling your order.

There will be a limit on the total number of Dark Cornish chickens that I will raise... that number is 100 (12 per customer maximum)

The meat chickens can't keep up with the strip-grazing cattle any longer (more cattle means quicker movement through the pastures); so they have to rotate around a separate area (while the hens follow the cattle). The pasture needs an average of six (6) weeks to recover before any livestock goes back into the same location. Therefore, I will have to put the meat chickens on their own area of pasture and limit the number.

On the bright side... in 2015 I can offer Stewing Hens. I'll have about 50 hens (6 per customer maximum) because in 2015 I have to replace the older hens with younger hens. The name tells you how to cook the meat of an older chicken (like in a stew where you cook the meat with wet heat at a low temperature for a longer period of time). All my hens are considered 'heavy' birds, so should be at least five (5) lbs after processing.

The time between the order form going out in the Spring and the deadline is only a couple weeks later and I do that to encourage you to NOT DELAY your decision making. I understand that most people are not used to ordering their meat several months prior to receiving it and especially not accounting for an entire year. I also understand that for most people, a \$15.00 chicken is a luxurious expense. You can assume that your chickens will be somewhere over two (2) pounds after processing. Now if you consider that one chicken yields six (6) entrée pieces (2 legs, 2 thighs, 2 breasts) and the rest can be used as chopped meat in a casserole or other entrée; you can actually get two (2) meals easily from one (1) chicken. AND, you can stretch it further by using the bones to make chicken stock.... mmmm, nummy! (Stewing Hens will also be somewhere over two (2) pounds pounds after processing.)

Please request an order form and remember to let me know if you will want your birds processed (and if you want the giblets: heart, liver, gizzard) or live. I instituted a deposit requirement in 2014. When you send in your order, please also send a check for HALF the total. I am not set-up to take credit cards this year... please do not send cash through the mail.

I do not ship any products and you are agreeing to:

1. Attend and help on at least one (1) processing morning.
2. Pick up your vacuum packed chickens at the scheduled date and time, at which time you will pay the balance due.

There are no exceptions to these requirements; however, you may send someone else in your place. ***If you order chickens, but do not fulfill your obligations; you will forfeit your chicken order and any money already paid.***

Processing dates and pickup dates will be pre-determined and listed on the order form so that you can choose the date you will help and the date you will pick up.* **They will not be the same date**, so you are committing to come to the farm twice: once to help with processing (in the morning) and once to pick up your chickens (in the late afternoon/evening).

*A limited number of chickens will be processed on each processing date. In the event that the date you have chosen has already been filled by other customers, you will be given the choice of choosing a different date or cancelling your order.

Your processed chickens will have been cooled overnight and vacuum-packed fresh. You should freeze any chickens you are not planning to eat within a week and the frozen chickens should last up to a year without freezer burn when vacuum-packed. I recommend thawing it in the refrigerator, still vacuum-packed, for a few days before you plan to use it. As with the fresh, vacuum-packed chicken, use it within a week from thawing.

Remember, meat chickens are available ONLY by pre-order and if you only get one or two this year, you will have to wait until February next year to order again... regardless of how delicious those one or two were and how much you wish you had ordered more.

PASTURED POULTRY

What is ‘Pastured Poultry?’ That is an excellent question and I am SO happy you asked!

Pastured Poultry is a concise phrase used to describe chickens that are raised in a pasture setting as opposed to a chicken yard or confinement house. They may live in a small structure that is open to the ground (no wire under their feet) that is moved once or twice a day so the birds are always on fresh grass. OR they may have a mobile coop (where they can go to roost [and (if they are hens, lay eggs)]) and take refuge at night which is surrounded by an electric net-type fence that allows the chickens to truly range freely and stay protected from predators; all of which is moved to provide fresh grass as needed. These chickens feed primarily on the bounty of nature in the form of insects and plants; additionally they are provided with fresh water, feed and mineral (et al) supplements to cover what may be lacking in that particular spot on that particular day.

Why not call them ‘Free-Range Chickens?’ Another excellent question!

What I (and probably, you) envision when the phrase ‘free-range chickens’ is presented is a bucolic landscape where chickens run about on green grass chasing bugs and enjoying the bright sunshine. Unfortunately, anyone (including confinement house production) following the technical definition as regulated by the USDA (which calls for the chicken to be “allowed access to the outside”) is able to use the phrase ‘free-range chickens.’ It makes knowing the farm where you get your food even more important. I have a neighbor who advertises that their eggs are from free-range chickens when, in fact, their chickens live in a chicken yard... a stationary coop with a 7 foot (+/-) chain link fence around a very small area that is completely dirt. I don’t want there to be any confusion about how my chickens live, so I opt to not use that phrase.

COOPS

I raise my chickens sustainably; which means they live on pasture and are not kept in a building or in a dirt yard.

The **hens** have the EggMobile (a mobile coop) surrounded by an electric net-type fence that allows the chickens to truly range freely and stay protected from predators.

The **cockerels** (males) have Cockerel Campers (a lightweight version of a Chicken Tractor) which is a small structure that is open to the ground (no wire under their feet) that is moved once a day so the birds are always able to sleep on fresh grass; it, too, is surrounded by an electric net-type fence that allows the chickens to truly range freely and stay protected from predators.

Both of these structures include a pop-hole (a chicken-size doorway) that I close after the chickens put themselves to bed at night and open first thing in the morning; providing extra protection while they sleep. To see these structures and how they were constructed, check out the pictures on their page: [Mobile Coops and More](#).

While providing the chickens with a lifestyle that is both ‘chicken-like’ and safe for them... I am also thinking about the fertility of the soil in my pastures. All that scratching, removing insects and pooping improves the pastures without the problems associated with over use... which are toxicity from the high potassium content in chicken poop, denuding the soil and irritability among the chickens (pecking).

BREEDS - TRIPLE PURPOSE

My chickens are both farm help (improving the soil) and food producers (eggs and chicken meat). In the chicken industry, the term ‘dual purpose’ means good for egg production and meat, so I guess you could say that my chickens are ‘triple purpose.’

I decided to forego the commercial breeds and chose instead Heritage Breeds. I did a great deal of research, visited the America Livestock Breeds Conservancy website and decided that the breeds which fit best for us are:

Hens:

- Black Australorps
- Light Brahmas
- Buff Orpingtons

These girls are heavy, dual-purpose birds who lay brown eggs and are especially hardy for cold weather.

Interested in purchasing my eggs? There is a separate archived PDF with more information.

Meat:

- Dark Cornish (also known as Indian Game Birds)

I order only cockerels (males) so that I end up with bigger meat birds when they achieve maturity at 16 weeks. I decided against getting the popular Rock/Cornish Hybrid that seems to be the staple for broilers because they grow abnormally fast and tend to have health issues (such as heart and leg problems). I don't think that health should be sacrificed for profit or convenience... do you? Besides, as the old saying goes: "You are what you eat" and I want to eat HEALTHY meat... again, do you?

So instead of an 8-week turn over with the Hybrid (4 weeks in the chick brooder and 4 weeks on pasture), my Dark Cornish cockerels will spend 4 weeks in the chick brooder and 12 weeks on pasture. This extra time and the fact that they are less confined make their meat more dense and flavorful. I also like that the Dark Cornish are a truly balanced bird... not overly heavy in the breast meat. Their breast meat may not be as plentiful as the Hybrid, but I find that it is very juicy and very flavorful.

FOOD (FEED)

Raising chickens on pasture does not mean (unfortunately) that you don't also have to provide them with food (or "feed" as it is commonly known). Our chickens eat insects, grass and other plant tidbits and some sand/soil from the pasture and I supply them with small grains, mineral supplements and lots and lots of fresh water.

Most (if not all) mainstream chicken feed uses cracked corn as its primary ingredient. As you may or may not already know, I am allergic to corn products of all types... even baking soda plays havoc with my digestive system. And, I have discovered that eggs produced by hens fed a primarily corn feed also give me problems. Lately I've been calling myself the 'Canary in the Corn Mine,' LOL. (For anyone who doesn't get the joke, it refers to the early days of coal mining when the miners would take a singing canary in a cage into the mines with them to detect poisonous gasses. Because it took very little of the gasses to kill the bird, if it stopped singing, the miners would have time to evacuate and then deal with the gasses before it killed them as well.

It is my opinion that many people with egg allergies may actually be reacting to the corn feed, but there is no proof of that (as far as I know). I eat the eggs from my pasture raised hens and have absolutely NO problem with them in any way.

All that information is provided to explain that I feed my chickens ***no corn, soy or wheat products***. That means my costs for feed are about double what I would otherwise pay. You get what you pay for and I am providing high quality, healthy eggs and chicken meat.