

# Poultry for Christmas



The Pekin is a breed of duck widely used as a table bird.

SOME people may consider that the centrepiece of the Christmas feast should be goose or turkey, but for the majority of New Zealanders it is more likely to be lamb or humbler poultry—perhaps a young duck or a tender cockerel, but more often just fowl, a designation which can cover anything from a well-fleshed yearling pullet to an old, scraggy hen. The age of the bird matters less than its quality and the cooking. First step toward a poultry dinner is either the purchase of a ready-dressed bird or the buying or selection of one alive and preparing it for the table; in this article those preparatory stages are explained by W. L. McIver, Poultry Instructor, Department of Agriculture, Hamilton. Good cooking can do a little to improve the poor-quality bird, but poor cooking can ruin the best of meat, so Eva Topping, Rural Sociologist, Department of Agriculture, Auckland, advises on ways to ensure good cooking of good poultry.

THAT many housewives do not think a Christmas dinner complete without poultry is the more curious because the same wives seldom serve poultry all the rest of the year. The explanation probably is that poultry is regarded as both a luxury meat and a bother to prepare. Yet the festive outlook toward Christmas is so strong that the practice of serving some kind of poultry meat then seems unlikely to die out. For many reasons it is to be hoped that this is correct, for many varieties of poultry can supply the basis for an attractive dinner, but unfortunately many housewives do not realise that poultry need not be a luxury meat or troublesome to prepare.

Admittedly, the purchase price of dressed poultry varies considerably throughout New Zealand and is high in the larger cities. Prices are also affected by the season, for as long as housewives flock to buy poultry for Christmas but not for the rest of the year, Christmas prices will remain high. Prices can be expected to be lowered permanently only if the public creates an increased demand for poultry and the farmer finds competing for the trade worth while. At present, with few exceptions, the farmer and the poulturer do not have to compete for trade because the public is not demanding either the quality or the quantity to warrant competition among suppliers. When that

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