

## *The Leghorn Rooster*

The leghorn hen is the favorite of chicken producers who want to mass market large white eggs. The leghorn hen will produce more eggs than any other breed of chicken. What of the much maligned better half. At least 50% or more, usually more, of the chicks hatched are roosters. For some reason, known only to the Creator, more male chickens are usually hatched than female. For most breeds in chicken world, males tend to be dumber, at least as they grow up. They are more likely to go out to dinner with a fox or get caught off guard by the hawk than the pullet. They just seem to have more energy and live more carefree than the pullet or maybe they are just having this great need to show off to the young females is what gets them in to trouble. The high energy leghorn rooster seems to be more wily than other breeds of chickens. I once was contacted by the local feed store who had mistakenly got 400 leghorn roosters by mistake and was looking for someone to take them. The cute little chicks would have had to have been destroyed if a home was not found for them. Remembering the super delicious chicken of my childhood,(my mom and dad raised 9 kids and two grand children on leghorn chicken) and thinking that it would not hurt to have a few extra chickens around to feed the wildlife, I agreed to take them in. I don't think I lost a single leghorn rooster as wildlife feed. They soon grew to terrorize the chicken coop even though they were only half the size of my heritage meat birds that I raise every year as pasture sanitizers. The quality of the eggs of my pastured brown egg layers soon deteriorated to the quality one finds with eggs from chickens kept penned up in the coop by the winter snows. At least in the winter I can get some greens into them by feeding them chunks of good alfalfa hay and some oats grown by my kids for entertainment in the basement. The high energy leghorn roosters seem to become super charged sex machines once they find out what hens were good for. As an example of how they terrorized the hens; once, when I used my John Deere Gator to check on the cattle grazing near the chicken coop a hen had some how managed to get a couple of hundred feet from the chicken mobile when the young roosters spotted her and a mob of them charged off in hot pursuit, the hen made a beeline for the nearest shelter she could find, the gator, and jump on the rear axel. Believing that she would jump off once I started the engine and got moving, I headed home, which was almost a mile away, not seeing her jump off, I got off to see if she had gotten stuck back there and found her still sitting on the back axel quite content to stay there.

What does all that activity mean for the meat of the leghorn rooster? Lots of lean delectable flavor, a chicken that spends so much time strutting its stuff, has little time to add fat to the bones. For those of you wanting to taste chicken as it was meant to taste and does not want the fat associated with the broiler chicken, this is the chicken for you. We love them fried. Because of their small bone structure, the pieces are smaller and therefore fry up much nicer than the golden plump type chicken. Another good thing about the leghorn rooster is that you don't get an over abundance of meat that might take a week to use up. This is especially true if you are a single person or a retired couple that do not eat or need a lot of meat in their diet. They steam up really well and are great salad toppers. The flavor these chickens added to salads could be said to be out of this

world, except for the fact, that they are raised so naturally on my farm. Here they are put out to pasture with the dairy cows to fend for themselves, needing both their wits and a true bird's eye to survive. This natural life style gives these chickens a real down to earth flavor that makes them great soup, salad toppers or stew flavorizers. And because of their high energy life style you get all that natural chicken flavor to your favorite dish without the fat.

The reason I have brought to your attention the great attributes of the leghorn chicken is because when I went into the Whole Farm Coop freezer to get some of my chicken which I was going to donate to a school fundraiser, we found a lot of leghorn chicken left in there. This was great for the fundraiser. The leghorns sold like hot cakes last year. Many people of the older generation, now retired from farming, have fond memories of the delicious leghorn chicken dinners. At our house it was a traditional Sunday dinner staple which us kids looked forward to every week. I think my mom did this as a reward for us going to church.

There are lots of halves and cut ups left in stock at the Whole Farm Coop, with new fresh spring chicken only months away. Purchasing these now in place of beef, of which the WFC is presently in short supply, would really show support. Also if you decide that the Leghorn Rooster has the flavor that you need for your soups and salads please let Robert and Kristin know. I don't plan on raising many leghorns this year and would like to get an idea of how many to purchase.

An added antidote;

Checking up on the chickens' one picture perfect summer day, I figured out where the term "Let's Book" came from. It had to have been coined by a leghorn chicken farmer raising his chicken out in the pasture. That day, when I got up to the coop something startled a couple of young leghorn rooster's and they took off across the pasture with their combs wagging and waddles flopping in the wind shouting out book- book- book-book-book. I had not seen anything so comical in quite a while as those two roosters booked across the pasture. It made my day and made me once again glad to be a sustainable farmer. This also brings to mind how truly appreciative I am of your support and your support of Whole Farm Coop without which I would not have opportunities to see and here the beautiful sights and sound found on the farm. Your support truly is leaving opportunities for the future. Thank you.

Sincerely;

Marty Primus  
Fresh Air Farm