

Buying Only Factory-Packaged Meats Is Doable

Dear Editor:

I read with great interest your article about the Monsey meat scandal. However, I have to take issue with some of what you wrote on page 36 under the heading The "Meat Section." You wrote: "Rubashkin will use only its own meat and chicken to be sold in the meat section of a supermarket."

I live in Brooklyn, and I can tell you that this statement is simply not true. There are stores in Brooklyn where one can see Vineland and Rubashkin factory packaged chickens in the same case at the same time. One can also see Meal Mart and Rubashkin meat in the same case at the same time.

You further wrote: "Why not tell all consumers to buy only products that come packaged in original packaging that comes directly from the chicken/meat producer? On an individual level that is a great idea and hopefully someday it will be practical for everyone. But right now there are several reasons why the repackaging system is strongly in place. People want butchering. They want a certain cut made a certain way. They want fresh meat. You are not always going to find all that coming from a major meat processor. More often than not, the repackaged meat/chicken is decidedly fresher. And people want low price."

Since the Monsey scandal I have decided to purchase only factory packaged meat and poultry. This has not created a great problem for me. There are places that do sell factory packaged poultry and meat. All of it is dated, so one knows what one is getting. My personal experience is that the prices of factory packaged are competitive with and at times cheaper than store packaged meat and poultry.

While it is true that one cannot get every cut of meat one might want all of the time, I think that this is a small price for me to pay if it guarantees that I am really getting what the package label says.

In truth, the move to factory packaged poultry and meat is up to the consumer. If consumers would insist on buying only factory packaged meat and poultry, then the factories would quickly increase the supply of such products, and the stores would feature them. After all, we do live in a consumer driven economy.

As I am sure you know, as of 1/1/07, Empire will no longer be shipping unpackaged poultry in bulk. Each chicken and all chicken parts will be packaged at the factory and then shipped. Therefore, I doubt that repackaged chicken must indeed be fresher than factory packaged. Empire prides itself on its products and must have a way to guarantee the freshness of their poultry. Surely other manufacturers can do the same. Sincerely yours,

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Editor's Reply:

The statement about Rubashkin using only its own meats was in reference to those limited number of supermarkets where Rubashkin actually owns the meat concession.

As to finding limiting oneself to factory-packaged meats a practical arrangement, we welcome other readers opinions.