

# Meat Seasoning Explained



## What is Meat Seasoning?

Meat seasoning was first applied to pork products in the 1800's and has since become a standard international practice of enhancing the flavour and tenderness of meat through the use of brine solutions. In the early 90's South Africa followed the trend in Europe and the US when poultry seasoning became widely practiced by main producers. Poultry seasoning involves a simple process of injecting a brine solution into the muscle meat of the product in order to regain vital components lost during the slaughtering process. This technique is mainly used for frozen poultry and is practiced by all main poultry producers in South Africa. Although similar ingredients are used (phosphates, water, salt, sugar, stabilizers, flavourants), the exact recipe of the brine mixture is unique to each producer. Sovereign Foods uses a high-quality brine solution specially formulated over a period of 7 years by leading international food scientists. All the ingredients used comply with international and domestic food regulations as stipulated by the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act (Act 54 of 1972). Through its wide range of products Sovereign also offers consumers various levels of seasoning, from zero to mild to moderate.

## Creating a Better Quality Product

The main rationale for poultry injection is to create a product that is both more tender & tasty. The main ingredient of the brine solution, phosphate, is a natural mineral found in all muscle tissue and helps to restore the muscle's capacity to retain nutrients and moisture. When an animal is slaughtered the pH level in the muscle tissue drops and production of natural ATP (adenosine triphosphate) is stopped. The outcome is that meat becomes stringy and dry which results in a very tough and tasteless product once cooked. This loss in water-binding capacity of the meat results in the decrease of nutrients and taste during cooking. As a means to restore the natural tenderness of the meat, poultry seasoning assists in bringing the pH closer to natural levels by returning phosphates to the muscle tissue. The process also helps to increase the capacity of the protein in the meat to retain nutrients & moisture, resulting in a more tender, juicier and tastier product once cooked.

## Poultry - The Most Affordable Source of Protein

As the world continues to face the challenges of higher food prices, more consumers are enjoying chicken as an affordable protein alternative. Compared with other animal protein options, frozen chicken remains the best value for money and the most popular, proven by the fact that 58% of South Africans\* make chicken their no1 choice for animal protein, thus making South Africa a true chicken-loving nation! The local poultry industry has a major role to play in ensuring that all South Africans have continued access to high quality, affordable protein. Seasoned frozen poultry enables consumers to enjoy this nutritious and tasty protein as part of a regular diet with a product that offers the best value for money as well as a longer shelf-life.

## Keeping the Consumer Informed

As part of its 'truthful labeling' policy, Sovereign Foods became the first major poultry producer in South Africa to declare its brine solution percentage on its packaging. The company believes in the integrity of transparent consumer communication and will continue to keep its consumers informed about all product information and developments, including the indication of all product ingredients, seasoning percentages and nutritional values on all packaging. All of Sovereign's product packaging have been updated according to the requirements of the latest labeling regulations under the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act (Act 54 of 1972), due for effect later in 2008.

\*Source: SA Poultry Industry Profile 2006 published by SAPA

