

Golden Star Duck leads the Chinese roast market

Roasted Peking Duck is a delicacy with special nutritional properties. Beijing Golden Star Duck researched ways on how to breed and grow the duck, and became the preferred supplier of the most renowned Roast Duck restaurant chains in China.

By Wiebe van der Sluis



Beijing Golden Star Duck owns 12 production farms of which some are old from the outside and modern from the inside.



One of the new production units makes use of modern housing technology.

A visit to China is not complete if you have not tasted the delicious Roasted Peking Duck. All over the country you can find restaurants and food service centres where the brown coloured bird attracts the attention of the guests. In Beijing there is a good chance that the roasted duck originates from the Beijing Golden Star Duck Centre. This enterprise was established in 1998 as a subsidiary of the Beijing Sanyuan Group, a state-owned company engaged in breeding, feeding, raising, slaughtering, processing and distribution of Peking Ducks. It is the largest Peking Duck company in the country and recommended as the Cradle of Peking Duck.

Beijing Golden Duck Centre has its own breeding programme. The Nankou

Peking Duck Breeding farm is the only state-level Peking Duck farm authorised by the Ministry of Agriculture. It is headed by one researcher with state allowance, who is assisted by six masters and 26 assistants and technicians. They share development and research resources with a number of universities, which allows them to make use of the traditional as well as biochemical and molecular breeding technology. That is why DNA fingerprinting, blood typing and RAPD tests are standard elements of breeding activities.

Forced feeding

The result of many years of scientific selection work has resulted in 15 breeding lines of which eight received governmental recognition. These

species form the basis of Beijing Golden Star's commercial products.

Each year the company sells over 530,000 breeders, in the proportion of five females and one male, for the roasted and non-roasted duck market. A large amount of these breeders are being used within the company itself. Beijing Golden Star Duck Centre owns a dozen production farms, all scattered around Beijing, with an output of more than 10 million ducks per year.

In order to meet demand, the company offers - within the roasted and non-roasted segmentation - birds in three different weight categories: 2-2.5 kg, 3-3.5 kg and over 4 kg. However, the roasted duck is the most important and most renowned product. In order to give the birds the irresistible roasted duck characteristics, a unique feeding programme has been designed. Up until the age of 35 days, when they are about 2 kg, usually all birds receive more or less the same treatment, but right after the birds are moved to finishing farms where they receive a special wet diet by forced feeding.



Transportation is taken care of by own trucks at the end of the day.



The modern plant of Dongfang Foods Co. is an important processing unit within the Beijing Golden Star Duck group.



General manager Zhang Yanping believes that a close cooperation with employees, researchers, customers, competitors and friends will make the Peking Roasted Duck even tastier.

One of the finishing farms has 30 houses with 1,000 birds each. There are two workers per house to take care of the birds. They force feed the birds four times per day (every six hours) by machine to develop the special texture and flavour of the meat and to make the birds irresistible raw material for roasted duck production. Major restaurant chains in the country have recognised the favourable characteristics to the Beijing Golden Star Duck and choose them as their sole supplier.

Processing at night

In recent years, Beijing Golden Star Duck invested several million euros into modernising their three slaughterhouses. The new slaughtering, processing and cooking plant in Tongzhou in south eastern Beijing is the largest, with a capacity of five million ducks per year.

These processing plants are located in the centre of the live production units, so there is a relatively short transportation distance. Most of the

Peking Duck for good health

The story of the Peking Duck can be traced back as early as to the Ming Dynasty, hundreds of years ago. During those days snacks were made from Peking Duck oil and tasted much better than snacks made from other oils. Therefore, people started to raise these ducks to get the special oil, for which it received the name Oil Duck. In the Qing dynasty, Beijing residents started to roast the duck after putting herbs and flavours inside the bird. The roasted duck was an instant success and became a common gift for health-conscious and fascinated eaters.

Today, the Peking Duck is known for its high nutritional value. It contains eight important amino acids and unsaturated fatty acids. Every gramme of Peking Duck has 1.71 micrograms linoleic acid and every gramme of breast meat contains 555 microgram bezoar acid, which makes the meat extremely easy to digest. Chinese nutritionists and physicians claim that eating Peking Duck meat can lower blood cholesterol levels in humans, lower blood lipid and alleviate blood density to prevent heart and blood diseases, and increase performance of the immune system especially with respect to diabetes and skin diseases.

Peking Duck meat is soft and tasty with 1673.5 muscle fibres in every square mm of breast meat and a fibre diameter of only 22.7 micron. Due to the special feeding programme the meat is well marbled with fats protected between the fibres to maintain its special flavour, freshness and soft touch.

farms are within a 20 km range. Special care is taken for the birds during loading and transportation, to avoid stress and (skin) damage. For the same reason birds are harvested in the late afternoon or evening, being the cooler hours of the day. Summer day temperatures can exceed 35°C, which is not the right temperature for bird transportation.

Consequently, the processing plants operate at night, so a fresh product can be delivered early the next morning at the client's door.

The Golden Star Duck slaughtering and processing business is operated by two companies: Dongfang Foods Corp and Sanyuan Gold Star Poultry Corp. Dongfang Foods is the largest and produces both roasted and non-roasted ducks as well as hundreds of fresh and frozen duck meat products. It focuses on the domestic as well as international market. Sanyuan Gold Star Poultry serves the domestic market with products that inherit the traditional Chinese cuisine arts. Its efforts paid off well, and helped to make Golden Star Ducks a top brand in China. ■



Buyers of roasted ducks demand clean and undamaged skin.



Sanyuan Gold Star Poultry is specialised in products that inherit the traditional Chinese cuisine arts.



Processing for the roasted duck market requires trained manpower.



A crispy nice brown coloured skin keeps the fat inside the meat.