

# WHAT USE IS A GOOSE?



You will be amazed when you learn the many uses of a goose !

Let us start with some of the obvious ones:

**Goose Feathers** Before we used pens, writing was done using goose quills which were put first into hot sand to harden the feather and then cut with a sharp knife to make a quill. ( Ink was made from the oak galls or soot blended with gum Arabic to make an ink.)

**Goose Down for Duvets and Pillows** Goose down comes with a variety of features. It is breathable and keeps you both warm and cool. Because of its high fill power, less goose down is required to fill up the pillows and duvets and there is therefore a lot of room within the goose down clusters for the air to circulate. Feathers do not come with any of these advantages.

What makes goose down so expensive is that goose down is extremely difficult to obtain. Compounding its rareness is the difference in the quality of goose down produced by different aged geese. Adult geese provide the softest, most comfortable, and highest fill power down. Young geese provide low quality down. So, taking care of the geese until they reach the adult stage, when it is the best time to get down from them, is an expensive enterprise

**Goose Fat** Goose fat is the fat of choice for making roast potatoes, cooking game or frying chicken livers or making a cassoulet. It provides the right degree of fat to give a crispness and lightness to the roast potatoes and is usually on sale at Christmas time for people to use when making Christmas Dinner. It can be kept for 3 months without going bad.

It is not true that cross-channel swimmers cover themselves in goose fat before a channel swim to keep warm. Goose fat does not keep you warm but can prevent chafing and is sometimes used for this purpose although these days Channel Grease is more often made from a mix of petroleum jelly and lanolin.

**Goose Liver** Foie gras is a popular and well-known delicacy in French cuisine. Its flavour is rich, buttery and delicate, unlike that of an ordinary duck or good liver. Foie gras is sold whole, or is prepared into a mousseline, parfait or pate and may be served as an accompaniment to food such as steak. However, many people feel that the force feeding of the goose to produce the foie gras is cruel and refuse to eat it!

**Goose Egg** A goose egg is very large and is approximately twice the weight of an ordinary hen's egg. It takes 15 mins. to boil a goose egg and usually one is sufficient for 2 people. A goose egg has very rich yolks so is good for making pasta, scrambled egg etc.

**Goose Meat** Goose is often a popular choice for Christmas Dinner instead of a turkey. Because of its high fat content, during cooking, it is advisable to let the fat drain off on a wire rack or on top of a trivet of vegetables to lift it off the base of the roasting tin. This will allow the fat to drain into the tray below and this can be used later for making roast potatoes, cassoulet etc. as mentioned above.

**Goose Feet** Geese use their feet while flying, almost like a rudder or flaps on an aeroplane. They lower their feet and spread the webbing between their toes before they land, creating drag to help them slow down

The primary use for their webbed feet is paddling through water. As the bird pulls its foot backwards through the water, the toes spread apart, causing the webs to spread out. The webs push more water than just a bird foot with spread-out toes would push.

**Goose as a Guard Dog** Thanks to its loud honks, geese make excellent guardians for smaller fowl, like chickens. They can scare off and even kill many smaller predators that otherwise would bother hens. They are known to be great at spotting aerial predators – Hawks, Kestrels who may pounce on unsuspecting small creatures.

### **Geese in Poetry**

Geese are widely used in Chinese Poetry but it is usually the wild goose rather than the domestic goose that is the more important. It signifies migratory seasonal change, or as "bearing a message of love from afar", by persons separated by a great distance (generally north and south, since that is how geese generally migrate), or as the "lone goose", bereft of both mate and flock.

Mary Oliver has written a well known poem 'Wild Geese' which encourages people to follow their own nature and inclinations and grasp the opportunities which the world has to offer.

You do not have to be good  
You do not have to walk on your knees  
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting  
You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves  
Tell me about your despair; yours and I will tell you mine.  
Meanwhile the world goes on  
Meanwhile the sun shines and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across  
the landscapes,  
Over the pairies and the deep trees,  
The mountains and the rivers.  
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
Are heading home again.  
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

The world offers itself to your imagination,  
Calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting  
Over and over announcing your place in the family of things.

**Goose Decorations** On a more mundane level, geese are a very popular form of sculpture and decoration, particularly for use outside as garden ornaments.

**Goose Step** The goose step is a special marching step performed on formal military parades and other ceremonies. While marching in parade formation, troops swing their legs in unison off the ground while keeping each leg rigidly straight, presumably like the goose.

**Goose Poo** This is not a use for a goose – rather the opposite but it worth knowing that a goose produces faeces every 12 minutes and leaves behind approx.. 2 lbs. of poo every day! For this reason, farmers and people at beauty spots are not keen when they see a flock of Canada geese descend as they know the mess that they are likely to leave behind.