

**Appendix D: Manufacturer Cooking  
Instructions (MCI) Focus Groups  
Moderator Guide**

## **Food Safety Consumer Research Project Manufacturer Cooking Instructions Focus Groups Moderator Guide**

### **I. Introduction—Welcome Group (5 minutes)**

- Who we are and who we represent
  - Introduce moderator.
  - Study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture or USDA.
- Why you have been asked to participate
  - You are consumers who prepare some of the products we want to talk about.
  - Your experiences as consumers are important to USDA.
  - You have opinions and ideas that we'd like to know about.
- How the discussion will work
  - Session will last about 1.5 hours.
  - So I can give you my full attention, tonight's session will be audio- and video-recorded. I will use the recordings to write a summary report, but I will not use names in any report.
  - Staff members from USDA have come tonight to hear your opinions firsthand. They'll be listening from behind the one-way mirror or via live streaming.
  - We would like the discussion to be open and informal and encourage interaction.
  - We would like to hear from everyone in the group.
  - One person talks at a time.
  - There are no right or wrong answers or ideas—we want YOUR opinions.
  - Silence or turn off cell phones.
- Participant introductions
  - State first name and favorite food to prepare at home.

### **II. Understanding of Preparation Instructions (30 minutes)**

For our first topic, consider both raw and processed meat and poultry products. The packaging for some meat or poultry products provides instructions on how to prepare, cook, or heat the product; these instructions are specific to the product. Preparation instructions on product packaging may be called "cooking instructions" or "heating instructions" or something similar.

1. Some product packages say “heating instructions” and others say “cooking instructions.”
  - a. Have you noticed that before?
  - b. If yes, why do you think that is?
2. For our discussion tonight, we will call them preparation instructions. Why do you think companies provide preparation instructions? (Probe: food safety, quality, mandatory)
3. Do you think that testing or a review process is conducted to make sure that the preparation instructions on meat and poultry products are correct and will result in a safe product if properly followed?
  - a. If yes, who does this? (Probe: government, manufacturer of product)
  - b. If no, should someone do this? (Probe: government, manufacturer of product)
4. Think about raw, single-ingredient refrigerated or frozen meat and poultry products that you buy from the meat department (e.g., raw ground beef or chicken breasts). Have you noticed whether those products have preparation instructions? [Moderator: only NRTE products]
  - a. If yes, how often do you use preparation instructions when preparing a fresh meat and poultry product for the first time?
  - b. If no, what information do you rely on to prepare the product? (Probe: recipe or cookbook instructions, past experience, best guess or estimate)
5. Now think about processed, refrigerated or frozen meat and poultry products, like stuffed chicken breasts, chicken nuggets or tenders, prepared meatloaf, ham, or frozen burger patties. Have you noticed whether those products have preparation instructions? [Moderator: could be RTE or NRTE products]
  - a. If no, what information do you rely on to prepare the product? (Probe: instructions, past experience, best guess or estimate)

If yes:

  - b. How often do you use preparation instructions when preparing a specific brand of processed, frozen meat and poultry product for the first time?
  - c. Do you follow the preparation instructions exactly as written or sometimes make changes?
    - i. If exactly as written, why do you follow the instructions exactly as written? What might happen if you didn't follow the instructions exactly as written?

- ii. If changes, what changes do you make? Why do you make these changes?
  - d. Have you ever noticed instructions to use a food thermometer?
    - i. If yes, do you ever use a food thermometer? Why or why not?
  - e. Now think about your experiences when preparing the same product again.
    - i. Do you refer to the preparation instructions each time you prepare the product, or do you sometimes rely on previous experience with the product?
    - ii. Are there some types of processed products for which you always look for preparation instructions? If yes, which products?
    - iii. Are there some types of processed products for which you never look for preparation instructions? If yes, which products?
  - f. Now think about your experiences if you are preparing the same type of product, for example, chicken nuggets, but a different brand you haven't purchased and prepared before. What do you do? [Probe: do you read the instructions on the new product and follow as written or do you prepare like you would for other similar products]
- 6. Do you think the instructions for one type of product, like frozen breaded, stuffed chicken products, apply to all brands of frozen breaded, stuffed chicken products, or do you think they are brand specific? Why?
  - a. What do you do if the preparation instructions differ from your previous experience with a particular type of product? For example, you usually cook a certain brand of stuffed chicken breasts for 35 minutes, but this brand requires only 20 minutes to cook.

### **III. Response to Manufacturer Cooking Instructions (MCIs) on Mock Packages (45 minutes)**

Now, we are going to look at the labeling on two different brands of chicken tenders (pass out first box).

[Note: We will use the mock boxes from the SHI study for two types of chicken tenders: Caldwells (RTE product) and Cloverfield (NRTE product with current SHI-modify instructions to state "For safety, this product must be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F" – i.e., delete "as measured by use of a meat thermometer."). Half of the groups will look at the RTE product first, and half will look at the NRTE product first.

### Questions for RTE product (Caldwells)

7. Please take a few minutes to look at the product. Where is information on how to prepare the product?
8. Many of you mentioned the heating instructions on the side. Is there other information on the box that tells you how to prepare the product? If so, where? What does it say?
9. Now let's look at the side of the box that says heating instructions. What information would you use to prepare the product? Why?
10. Is there other information you need to know to prepare the product that's not provided? If yes, describe.
11. Is there anything you do not need to know that could be eliminated? If yes, describe.
12. Is anything confusing? If yes, how can it be clarified?

### Questions for NRTE product (Cloverfield)

Okay, please put the Caldwells box to the side. Now let's look at the box for the Cloverfield chicken breast tenders (pass out second box).

13. Please take a few minutes to look at the product. Where is information on how to prepare the product? [Ask each participant; we want to know if they are looking at SHI (on back) or cooking instructions (on side).]
14. Many of you mentioned the cooking instructions/safe handling instructions. Is there other information on the box that tells you how to prepare the product? If so, where? What does it say?
15. What information would you use to prepare the product (clarify to see if the information is in the SHI or the cooking instructions)? Why?
16. Let's look at the side of the box where the suggested cooking instructions are provided. Is there other information you need to know to prepare the product that's not provided? If yes, describe.
  - a. In your own words, can you please describe what this statement means: "For safety, this product must be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F." (Moderator: Refer to flip chart that has this statement)
    - i. [Probes: What does internal temperature mean? If confusion on internal temperature of product vs. oven temperature, how can this be clarified?]
  - b. How can you check to see that the product is cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F?

- c. Any suggestions on how to revise these instructions so that it is clear you are supposed to use a food thermometer to check that the product has reached an internal temperature of 165°F (e.g., add the phrase “as measured by use of a food thermometer”)?
  - d. Any other thoughts on how to revise these instructions to encourage you to use a food thermometer?
17. Is there anything you do not need to know that could be eliminated? If yes, describe.
18. Is anything confusing? If yes, how can it be clarified?
19. Why do you think microwaving is not recommended?
- a. Probe: Would you microwave a product that said microwaving is not recommended?
20. This box has cooking instructions on the side and safe handling instructions on the back [point out on product]. Why do you think that is?
- a. What is the same about the two sets of instructions?
  - b. What is different about the two sets of instructions?
  - c. Which set of instructions is most useful to you? Why?
  - d. Is it confusing or helpful to have two different sets of instructions? Why?
    - i. If confusing, any thoughts on how to make it less confusing?
    - ii. Probe if not mentioned: What are your thoughts on somehow combining the two sets of instructions? How would you do that?
21. Sometimes the cooking or heating instructions are on the back of the package and sometimes they are on the side. Any thoughts on the best location for these instructions? Why do you say that?
22. Now let’s look at the two products together; you can place them side by side in front of you. What are some differences between the two products? [Probe if no one mentions uncooked vs. fully cooked.]
23. Why do you think the Caldwells product has heating instructions but the Cloverfield product has cooking instructions?
24. Why do you think the Cloverfield product has safe handling instructions but the Cloverfield product does not?
25. When buying these types of frozen products, do you check to see whether the product is fully cooked or not?
- a. Does whether a product is fully cooked or not influence your purchase decision? If yes, why?

#### **IV. Understanding of Differences between RTE and NRTE (10 minutes)**

Now let's move to a different topic.

26. Some meat and poultry products require cooking for safety, and some do not. What does "cooking for safety" mean to you?
27. What are the characteristics of meat and poultry products that require cooking for safety? (Probe: information on product label, physical appearance, type of packaging)
28. What are the characteristics of meat and poultry products that do not require cooking for safety, that is, are already cooked? (Probe: information on product label, physical appearance, type of packaging, type of processing)
29. How do you decide if a product requires cooking for safety? (Probe: product labeling, physical appearance, past experience, product name, cooking instructions, SHI)

#### **V. Wrap Up**

- Any other comments or questions before we wrap up?
- Thank you for participating.
- Please pick up your honorarium and free gift on your way out.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0583-0xxx and the expiration date is 0x/xx/20xx. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 1.5 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

## Caldwell Chicken Tenders



# Caldwells Simply Smart

**GLUTEN FREE**  
Breaded Chicken  
Tenders

BREADED TENDER SHAPED CHICKEN BREAST PATTIES WITH RIB MEAT

## HEATING INSTRUCTIONS

### CONVENTIONAL OVEN/TOASTER OVEN (PREFERRED):



1. Preheat oven to 425°F.
2. Place frozen chicken tenders in a single layer on a baking sheet and heat for 9-11 minutes.
3. For a crispier product, turn halfway through heating time.
4. Let stand 2-3 minutes before serving.

### MICROWAVE OVEN:



1. Place 3 tenders on a microwave plate.
2. Heat, uncovered, on HIGH, 14 seconds, turning halfway through heating time.
3. Let stand 2-3 minutes before serving.

APPLIANCES MAY VARY.  
HEATING TIMES ARE APPROXIMATE.

## PER SERVING

<b>210</b> CALORIES	<b>2g</b> SAT FAT 10%DV	<b>480mg</b> SODIUM 20%DV	<b>1g</b> SUGARS	<b>9g</b> PROTEIN 10%DV
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# Caldwells Simply Smart



Our Chickens Are  
Raised With  
No Antibiotics Ever  
All Vegetarian Diet

All Natural  
White Meat Chicken<sup>†</sup>

25% Fewer Calories &  
40% Less Fat  
THAN USDA DATA FOR BREADED FRIED BONELESS CHICKEN

No Hormones or  
Steroids Added<sup>‡</sup>

NET WT. 22 OZ. (1.38 LB) 623G

**GLUTEN FREE**  
Breaded Chicken  
Tenders

BREADED TENDER SHAPED CHICKEN BREAST PATTIES WITH RIB MEAT

<sup>†</sup> MINIMALLY PROCESSED. NO ARTIFICIAL INGREDIENTS  
<sup>‡</sup> FEDERAL REGULATIONS PROHIBIT THE USE OF HORMONES OR STEROIDS IN POULTRY.  
FULLY COOKED • KEEP FROZEN

SERVING  
SUGGESTION



**Caldwells  
Simply Smart**

**GLUTEN FREE**  
Breaded Chicken  
Tenders

BREADED TENDER SHAPED CHICKEN BREAST PATTIES WITH RIB MEAT

# Caldwells Simply Smart

**GLUTEN FREE**  
Breaded Chicken  
Tenders

BREADED TENDER SHAPED CHICKEN BREAST PATTIES WITH RIB MEAT



Eating well is not just about how the food tastes,  
but the nutrition and flavor that come from  
using real, quality ingredients.  
We have carefully selected seasonings, such as  
honey and brown sugar, to enhance the flavor  
of our all natural chicken for your enjoyment.



**Caldwells  
Simply Smart**

**GLUTEN FREE**  
Breaded Chicken  
Tenders

BREADED TENDER SHAPED CHICKEN BREAST PATTIES WITH RIB MEAT



Find us at [Caldwells.com](http://Caldwells.com)

Interested in cooking ideas?  
Contact our experts for tips, recipes  
and other information.  
1-855-555-5555

We want to hear from you!  
**Caldwells**

**Nutrition Facts**

Amount Per Serving  
Calories 210 Calories from Fat 90  
%Daily Value\*

Total Fat	10g	15%
Saturated Fat	2g	10%
Trans Fat	0g	
Cholesterol	40mg	13%
Sodium	480mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate	23g	8%
Dietary Fiber	0g	4%
Sugars	1g	
Protein	9g	
Vitamin A	0%	
Vitamin C	0%	
Iron	4%	
Calcium	0%	

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a diet of 2,000 calories.

**Ingredients:** Boneless chicken breast with rib meat, water, rice flour, yellow corn flour, yellow corn meal. Contains less than 2% of salt, corn starch, brown sugar, raisin juice concentrate, honey, yeast extract, onion powder, garlic powder, white pepper, spices, celery seed extract.

Distributed by: Caldwell's, Elkton, MD 21921

... Certified Gluten-Free by the Gluten-Free Certification Organization. [www.gluten.org](http://www.gluten.org)

**HARVESTED IN THE USA.**  
CHICKEN HATCHED, RAISED &

\*\*This product contains 210 calories and 10g fat vs 292 calories and 19.34g fat per 99g serving based on USDA nutrient data.

## **Cloverfield Chicken Tenders**



Gluten free  
Breaded  
**CHICKEN BREAST  
TENDERS**

CONTAINS UP TO 6% MARINADE OF WATER AND SEA SALT



**KEEP FROZEN  
READY TO COOK.  
SUGGESTED COOKING  
INSTRUCTIONS**

Our Breaded Tenders are **UNCOOKED**. For safety, this product must be cooked to an internal temperature of **165°F**. Cooking times may vary.

**Bake:** Preheat oven to **375°F**. Spread frozen Tenders on a baking sheet and bake for **25-30 minutes**.

**Pan Fry:** Heat vegetable oil (1/8") in skillet until hot. Fry Tenders in the hot oil over medium heat **10 minutes**, turning over after **5 minutes**. Tenders should be golden brown on both sides.

**Microwave:**  
Not recommended.

For recipes, visit:  
[Cloverfieldfood.com/recipes](http://Cloverfieldfood.com/recipes)



13:58 BEST BY: 06.26.22

**UNCOOKED**  
FOR SAFETY, THIS PRODUCT MUST BE COOKED TO AN INTERNAL TEMPERATURE OF 165° F.

**Breaded  
CHICKEN BREAST  
TENDERS**

CONTAINS UP TO 6% MARINADE OF WATER AND SEA SALT

**WHOLE BREAST MEAT TENDERS!**  
Made From Chicken  
**RAISED WITHOUT ANTIBIOTICS**

**Gluten free**

NET WT 12 oz (340g)

PER SERVING

<b>210</b> CALORIES	<b>1.5g</b> SAT FAT 8% DV	<b>440mg</b> SODIUM 18% DV	<b>1g</b> SUGARS	<b>20g</b> PROTEIN 40% DV
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KEEP FROZEN  
SERVING SUGGESTION



Gluten free  
Breaded  
**CHICKEN BREAST  
TENDERS**  
CONTAINS UP TO 6% MARINADE OF WATER AND SEA SALT

Gluten free  
Breaded  
**CHICKEN BREAST  
TENDERS**

CONTAINS UP TO 6% MARINADE OF WATER AND SEA SALT



**Gluten free, Breaded Chicken Breast Tenders**

**Nutrition Facts**  
Serving Size: 4oz (112g)  
Servings Per Container: 3

Amount Per Serving		%Daily Value*
<b>Calories 210</b>	Calories from Fat 70	
<b>Total Fat 8g</b>		<b>12%</b>
Saturated Fat 1.5g		<b>8%</b>
Trans Fat 0g		
<b>Cholesterol 35mg</b>		<b>12%</b>
<b>Sodium 440mg</b>		<b>18%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate 14g</b>		<b>5%</b>
Dietary Fiber 2g		<b>8%</b>
Sugars 1g		
<b>Protein 20g</b>		
<b>Vitamin A 0%</b>	<b>Vitamin C 0%</b>	
<b>Calcium 0%</b>	<b>Iron 2%</b>	

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300mg	375mg
Dietary Fiber		25mg	30g

Calories per gram:  
Fat 9 • Carbohydrates 4 • Protein 4

**The Cloverfield Food  
DIFFERENCE**

**Our Chickens are happy and American Bred.** Raised here in the USA, without Antibiotics through food, water or injection.

**What 100% Air Chilled means for you.**  
**NO RETAINED WATER**

- DIFFERENCE**
- Individually slow chilled
  - Natural Juices not diluted
  - No Chlorinated water absorbed

**Our Gluten Free Tenders are made with the same great tasting chicken we use in our regular tenders.**



**Our Products are all natural.**  
No Preservatives  
No Artificial Ingredients  
No Fillers  
No more than minimally processed  
Produced in our own Georgia processing facility

**Our Family proudly providing your family with chicken since 1910.**

**SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS**

THIS PRODUCT WAS PREPARED FROM INSPECTED AND PASSED MEAT AND/OR POULTRY. SOME FOOD PRODUCTS MAY CONTAIN BACTERIA THAT COULD CAUSE ILLNESS IF THE PRODUCT IS MISHANDLED OR COOKED IMPROPERLY. FOR YOUR PROTECTION, FOLLOW THESE SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS.

- KEEP FROZEN.**
- KEEP RAW MEAT AND POULTRY SEPARATE FROM OTHER FOODS. WASH WORKING SURFACES (INCLUDING CUTTING BOARDS), UTENSILS, AND HANDS AFTER TOUCHING RAW MEAT OR POULTRY.**
- COOK THOROUGHLY.**
- KEEP HOT FOODS HOT. REFRIGERATE LEFTOVERS IMMEDIATELY OR DISCARD.**

**Ingredients:**  
Chicken Breast Meat Tenders, Marinated in Water and Sea Salt. Breaded with Rice Flour, Water, Yellow Corn Flour, Sea Salt, Xanthan Gum, Dried Whole Eggs, Yeast, Cane Sugar, Black Pepper, Onion Powder, Garlic Powder.

*Flash fried in Organic Expeller Processed Soybean Oil to set breading.*

**ALLERGEN INFORMATION:** Contains Egg

**Produced by:** Cloverfield Food, Columbus, GA 31909  
Hatched, raised and harvested in the U.S.  
[cloverfieldfood.com](http://cloverfieldfood.com)  
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