

## Hmong Chickens

The Hmong chicken, or better known in Hmong community as (qaib xiav nqaij), which when translated to English simply means (blue chicken meat), may possibly be one of the greatest hidden treasures among poultry enthusiasts here in the US. While fibromelanistic breeds have been the rage over the last couple years with the introduction of Ayam Cemani and Svart Hona, few have realized that the fibro gene had traveled to this country many years before, only to have been hidden away within our Hmong communities. Traveling with families from their native country long before there were restrictions on doing so, Hmong chickens have continued to be raised and cherished in their pure and unadulterated form. This blue/black skin chicken has been a sense of pride, and no doubt, a constant reminder of the homeland that their keeper's love so much. Raised primarily by the older generation, and then passed down to the next when they have grown mature enough to appreciate them, these birds remain to be more than a chicken, but a connection between a people and their homeland. In addition to being a reminder of one's heritage, Hmong chickens are also cherished for their believed healing properties. And often are served as a meal to help one regain strength. Hmong chickens will slightly vary in their appearance and body type depending on each individual families preference and breeding program, yet have continued to remain true to their native cousins in Thailand, with most having longer legs and necks, hard, tight feathering and a more muscular, gamey appearance. Being found in both pea and straight comb variety, they boast an array of spectacular feather color. Colors can range from ginger and wheaten blues to exquisite reds, solid black to solid white, and just about every color in between, with many expressing amazing lacing and colored feather patterns. And of course we cannot forget that incredible fibromelanistic gene that gives them their dark skin and the name Qaib Xiav Nqaij (Blue chicken Meat)! While there are many currently being raised in this country, getting your hands on one may prove a bit more difficult. Being highly esteemed and regarded as a family heirloom, they are seldom released and or sold. If you do get so lucky enough to obtain one, recognize you have received more than just a chicken, but a people's pride, joy, and heritage

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