

### **Red meat or white meat? No, I want BLACK meat!**

Yes, the inhabitants of Jhabua and Dhar districts of Madhya Pradesh can enjoy the black meat of Kadaknath chicken which is locally appreciated as Kali Masi (which means ‘fowl having black flesh’). Although the old chicks are bluish to black, adults are mostly black or bluish black in color. The comb, wattle, and tongues are purplish and feet are greyish.



The striking feature of this bird is many of the internal organs are black in color. The black coloration is due to excess deposition of melanin pigment skin and several other tissues or organs such as blood vessels, muscles, gonads, and tracheas because of a genetic condition known as fibromelanosis or dermal hyperpigmentation. Black breeds are also found in other domesticated chicken breeds, such as Ayam Cemani in Indonesia, Kadaknath in India, Black H'Mong in Vietnam, Argentinean, Tuzo type in Argentina, and Svarthöna in Sweden.

Kadaknath is a native breed whose range extends from Madhya Pradesh to the neighboring districts of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Considered as sacred among tribes, they used to rear this bird for the sacrificial purpose during the festivals. The black meat is not only taste bud tickler but also has high nutritive and medicinal value. No wonder, this famous Kadaknath chicken has earned a geographical indication (GI) tag that denotes that the product is culturally associated with a specific geographical area, and often enhances its commercial value. However, largely owing to its high consumption rate its population has declined drastically in recent times. A ray of hope: an organized breeding is in full swing in some areas that may cater to consumer needs. So, instead of shuttling between red and white, let's go for black (not dog) chicken.

*Photo: Press Trust of India (PTI)*

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