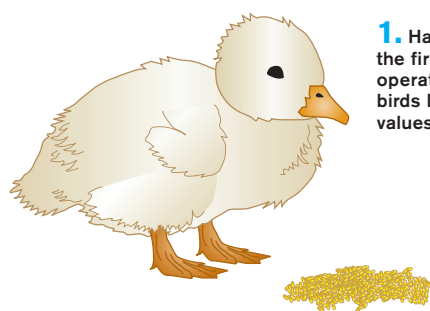


Foie gras

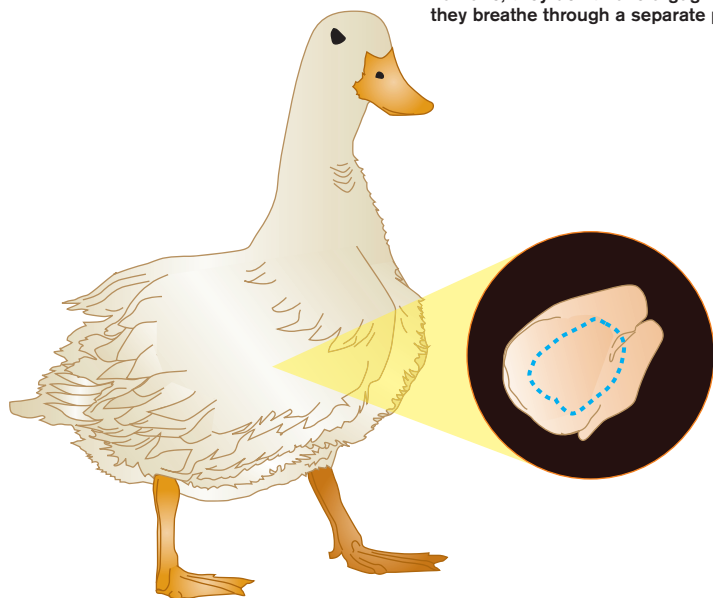
FOIE GRAS MEANS “FAT LIVER” IN FRENCH, AND FRANCE is by far the largest producer, but it was the ancient Egyptians who developed the technique of fattening the livers of migratory birds. Foie gras today refers to the enlarged livers of specially

raised geese and ducks, which is sold in whole and half lobes and ground into pate.

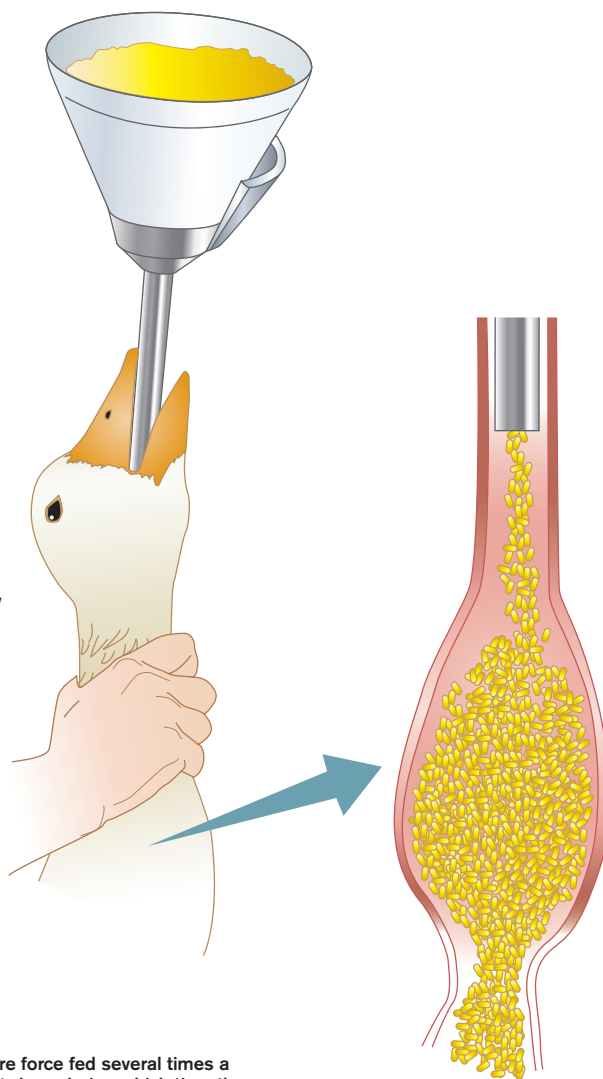
Controversy enters with the technique of force-feeding (called gavage) the birds for a few weeks before slaughter.



1. Hatchlings are raised on a regular diet for the first nine to 15 weeks. As at other poultry operations, the conditions under which the birds live depend upon how much the producer values humane practices over profit.



2. About three weeks before slaughter, the birds are force fed several times a day. The traditional feed is corn boiled with fat, but modern farms use high-calorie, high-fat pellets. The feeder consists of a hopper, which looks like a large funnel, attached to a 12- to 18-inch feeding tube. The worker inserts the tube directly into the duck or goose's throat and pumps a pre-measured amount of food into its gullet in a few seconds. Ducks and geese have a tough protective layer in their esophagus, which typically protects them from damage. Also, unlike humans, they don't have a gag reflex because they breathe through a separate passageway.



3. The birds are force fed several times a day for 18 to 21 days, during which time the daily amount increases. This extra food is stored as fat in the liver, which can grow to as much as six times its normal size. At the end of the force-feeding cycle, the birds are slaughtered and the livers are removed. The livers are cleaned, examined, weighed and chilled for sale.