WHITE PAPER

THE SCIENCE OF TENDER CHICKEN:

HOW BRINE UNLOCKS THE FULL POTENTIAL OF FRESH CHICKEN

Mountaire® Blue Label™ with Brineworks™ · Brined Fresh Chicken | Consumer & Trained Sensory Panel · June 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mountaire® Blue Label™ fresh chicken is already among the most trusted names in foodservice. Mountaire® Brineworks™ takes that quality foundation and builds on it — adding a salt and mineral brine that measurably improves juiciness, flavor, and tenderness, making the product more forgiving under the demanding conditions of a commercial kitchen.

To validate that improvement, Mountaire Farms commissioned an independent consumer sensory study. Sixty consumers evaluated brined and unbrined Mountaire Blue Label chicken — breasts and tenderloins — in a blind, side-by-side comparison. The results provide a clear, data-backed case for Mountaire Brineworks as a performance upgrade for foodservice operators.



THE OPPORTUNITY: UNLOCKING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF FRESH CHICKEN

Fresh chicken breast and tenderloins are workhorses of the foodservice menu. They are versatile, familiar to guests, and — when executed well — among the most satisfying proteins on the plate. But executing them well, consistently, across a high-volume kitchen environment, is one of the most demanding back-of-house challenges an operation faces.

Chicken breast has a narrow window of peak eating quality. Under ideal conditions it is juicy, flavorful, and tender. Under real-world variables — high heat, hold time, volume cooking — it can lose moisture and flavor more quickly than other center-of-plate proteins. That gap between a perfectly cooked piece and an imperfectly cooked one is narrow and easy to notice.

Mountaire Brineworks is designed to close that gap. By brining fresh Mountaire Blue Label chicken in a salt and mineral brine before delivery, Mountaire Brineworks builds moisture retention, flavor depth, and textural resilience into the product itself.

WHAT CONSUMERS SAID

MOUNTAIRE® BRINEWORKS™ PRODUCT (BLIND PANEL)

"It tastes like higher quality chicken."

"So flavorful and juicy and tender — I don't think you could cook or prepare it any better."

"The texture and moisture were great. I feel like I cooked this myself."

THE SCIENCE: HOW BRINE WORKS

Salt and mineral brining is a well-established food science technique with decades of application in commercial poultry processing. Mountaire Brineworks uses an injection brining process, delivering the brine directly into the muscle tissue rather than relying on surface soaking or tumbling. When the brine is introduced at depth, it interacts with the natural protein structure of the meat from within, increasing its water-holding capacity throughout. The result is a product that retains more of its moisture during cooking, holds its eating quality longer under heat, and arrives at the plate juicier and more tender.

There is a flavor dimension as well. Because the brine is injected throughout the muscle — not applied to the surface and left to penetrate — salt and savory compounds are distributed evenly from the inside out, creating a more complete, satisfying flavor from the first bite. An independent, trained sensory panel confirmed this mechanism directly, measuring significant increases in brothy flavor, salt, and umami in the brined product versus the unbrined baseline. At the same time, they measured a meaningful reduction in astringency and metallic finish — producing a cleaner, more pleasant eating experience overall.

THE BACK-OF-HOUSE BENEFIT: FORGIVENESS

For foodservice kitchens, the most practical benefit of brining may be what food scientists call forgiveness — the product's tolerance for the variables that are hardest to control at scale:



HOLD TIME

Brined chicken retains eating quality longer after cooking, extending the acceptable service window.



HIGH-HEAT COOKING

Brining partially buffers the moisture flash-loss that occurs under intense grill or convection heat.



VOLUME COOKING

When time and labor is limited, a more forgiving product delivers more consistent results across the line.

THE EVIDENCE: WHAT THE RESEARCH FOUND

In June 2026, Mountaire Farms commissioned an independent, blind sensory study comparing Mountaire Blue Label with Brineworks to unbrined control cuts of Mountaire Blue Label chicken — evaluating both breasts and tenderloins. Sixty consumers tasted both products side by side without knowing which was which. Here is what they found.

1 CONSUMERS STRONGLY PREFER THE FLAVOR

Flavor was the attribute that improved most — and the one consumers mentioned most often when asked what they liked. On a 9-point scale, brined tenderloins scored a full point and a half higher on overall flavor.

Flavor liking: +1.5 pts for tenderloins, +0.8 pts for breasts · Both statistically significant

2 JUICINESS IS THE MOST CONSISTENT WIN — ACROSS BOTH CUTS

Juiciness was the standout result across breasts and tenderloins alike. Consumers rated brined product >1 full point juicier on a 9-point scale — one of the largest improvements observed across all attributes tested. The trained panel confirmed why: brined product retains significantly more moisture during cooking and is measurably less hard in texture.

Juiciness liking: +1.15 pts (breasts), +1.10 pts (tenderloins)

3 WHEN GIVEN A CHOICE, CONSUMERS CHOOSE BRINEWORKS

In a direct, forced-choice comparison — no ratings, just a decision — 85% of consumers chose the brined tenderloin as their preference. For breasts, 78% chose the brined product as more tender in a forced-choice test. These are not close results. In a blind test with no brand or price signals, Mountaire Brineworks won decisively.

Overall preference: 85% brined tenderloins · Most tender (breasts): 78% brined · Both significant

4 CONSUMERS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO PURCHASE IT

When asked how likely they would be to buy each product, consumers rated Mountaire Brineworks brined tenderloins 38% higher on purchase intent. For breasts, the lift was 20%. Consumer preference for the eating experience translates directly to purchase intent.

Purchase intent lift: +38% tenderloins, +20% breasts · Both statistically significant

CONSUMER VOICES — BRINED PRODUCT

"Really great flavor and more tender. I like the added flavor and salt."

"Excellent flavor and texture. Nothing to dislike."

"Best sample — good texture, juicy, tender, better flavor."



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUR OPERATION

CONSISTENCY YOU CAN COUNT ON

Mountaire Brineworks reduces the performance gap between a perfectly executed piece and an imperfectly executed one. Because the product begins with more moisture in the muscle tissue, it takes longer to cross the quality threshold to what guests perceive as dry or tough, giving your team more margin across every station and every shift.

FEWER RE-FIRES, LESS WASTE, BETTER HOLD

A more forgiving product means fewer pieces discarded under hold and fewer re-fires during service. In operations where chicken is cooked ahead and held — banquet, contract foodservice, cafeteria-style, quick-service — brined product delivers more consistent quality without additional labor or attention.

GUEST SATISFACTION THAT DRIVES RETURN VISITS

A 38% lift in purchase intent is not just a product metric. It is a signal about repeat visit behavior. Guests who have a better chicken experience are more likely to return and to reorder. The consumer verbatims from the study reinforce this: words like "higher quality," "nothing to dislike," and "I would cook this myself" reflect the kind of satisfaction that earns a second visit.

THE CASE FOR MOUNTAIRE BRINEWORKS

Mountaire Blue Label is already a quality brand that operators trust. Mountaire Brineworks is what happens when that quality chicken is enhanced to perform even better — in the kitchen, on the plate, and in the guest's experience.

The study provides an unusually rigorous foundation for that claim. Under blind conditions, with food-away-from-home consumers, evaluating real kitchen-cooked product, the brined version was preferred for flavor, juiciness, and tenderness, the key drivers of liking.

For operators, the case is straightforward: Mountaire Brineworks delivers a more satisfying eating experience, a more forgiving cooking process, and stronger consumer buying signals, all backed by independent testing.

- Measurably juicier, compared by 60 consumers in a blind taste test
- More flavorful: brothy, savory, and satisfying from the inside out
- More tender and less tough under real foodservice cooking conditions
- +38% higher purchase intent for tenderloins; +20% for breasts

ABOUT MOUNTAIRE BLUE LABEL WITH BRINEWORKS

Mountaire Blue Label with Brineworks is a brined fresh chicken program available on boneless skinless chicken breasts and tenderloins. A direct drop-in replacement for fresh chicken in any foodservice application. For ordering information, contact your Mountaire Farms sales representative or authorized foodservice distributor.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Research was conducted independently June 2026, across two simultaneous studies:

Independent third-party consumer sensory study, June 2026. 60 participants compared Mountaire Brineworks marinated chicken tenderloins and breasts to unmarinated Mountaire chicken tenderloins and breasts. All samples were cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F and held for no more than 30 minutes before evaluation. No other brands were tested.

Based on internal culinary testing (June 2026) of Mountaire Brineworks, comparing marinated chicken breasts and tenderloins to conventional, unmarinated chicken. Product was oven-roasted, braised, steamed, pan-seared, grilled or deep-fried, cooked to 165°F and to an overcooked 185°F, and served immediately or after hot-holding for up to 60 minutes. Brineworks scored higher on average sensory ratings than the unmarinated Mountaire product in each temperature and hold condition tested.

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