

QUICK CHICKEN

Chicken is the ubiquitous food of our era. It crosses multiple cultural boundaries with ease. With its mild taste and uniform texture, chicken presents an intriguingly blank canvas for the flavor palette of almost any cuisine. It's generally quick to prepare. Perfect for mid-week meals and its cost are so much better than other protein meats. For most Americans it remains a nostalgic, evocative dish.

In my classes there are a couple of questions that often come up:

- Which is better bone-in or boneless chicken breasts?
- Should I wash chicken before I cook it?

Bone-in, skin-on chicken breasts, also known as “Split” breasts, are the most traditional and versatile cut. Their distinct anatomy, including the breastbone, rib cage, and skin, imparts a rich flavor and succulent texture to any dish. The advantages of a bone-in breast are several:

- It is more flavorful by far. The bone and skin contribute to an intense, savory flavor that enhances any marinade or seasoning.
- It's juicy because the bones and skin retain moisture during cooking, resulting in a succulent and tender breast. This juiciness is hard to beat. The bone helps the chicken cook more evenly and the skin locks in moisture.
- The skin crisps up beautifully when roasted or grilled, adding an extra layer of texture and flavor.

Boneless chicken breasts, as the name suggests, have had the bone and skin removed, resulting in a lean and convenient cut. Their streamlined shape and lack of bones make them ideal for quick and easy meal preparation.

Compared to bone-in:

- They are timesaving. Boneless breasts eliminate the need for deboning and skinning, saving you time in the kitchen.
- They are very lean. With the bone and skin removed, boneless chicken breasts contain fewer calories and fat.
- They are very versatile taking to a wide range of cooking methods, including grilling, sautéing, and baking.

My choice: bone-in every time because of their flavor. They take a little longer to cook: 35 to 45 minutes to bake at 350 degrees F, compared to the 15 to 25 minutes at 425 degrees F needed to bake boneless breasts but the time is worth it.

Equipment tip

- The most important thing you can do to make sure your chicken is not dry is to avoid overcooking it. While bone-in chicken will give you more moist results and

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a bit more leeway, if you cook any cut of chicken too long, no matter what you will dry it out.

- The best, most foolproof way to know if chicken is done is to use an instant read thermometer. When it registers 165 degrees F at the thickest part (make sure the thermometer is touching meat, not bone) the chicken is done.

Should You Wash Chicken Before Cooking?

Many people do because they think it's safer to rinse chicken to get rid of bacteria or germs. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), you don't need to wash your chicken. In fact, the CDC advises against washing any raw meat including chicken, turkey and eggs because the splashing water can spread germs to your sink, countertops and other surfaces. Those germs could then get on other foods you're preparing and make you sick.

The CDC issues a reminder every year to home cooks about preventing food poisoning while cooking chicken or turkey. The heat of cooking will kill any germs sooo don't wash.



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“FRIED” CORN FLAKE CRUMBED CHICKEN

Serves 4

We all need a simple and tasty chicken dish that doesn't involve a lot of prep or exotic ingredients.

- 2 cups well-shaken buttermilk
- 4 large garlic cloves, peeled and lightly crushed
- 3 tablespoons hot sauce, such as sriracha or to taste
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt plus more as desired
- 2 teaspoons finely ground black pepper plus more as desired
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika, optional
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 skinless, bone-in chicken thighs
- 4 skinless, bone-in chicken drumsticks
- 2 cups crushed cornflakes
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter (1/2 stick), melted

Combine buttermilk, garlic, hot sauce, salt, pepper, paprika, and cayenne in a large bowl and stir to combine. Rinse chicken and pat dry with paper towels, then transfer to a 13-by-9-inch baking dish. Pour buttermilk mixture over chicken, cover, and refrigerate overnight, turning once or twice.

Heat the oven to 400°F and arrange a rack in the middle. Place a metal cooling rack inside a rimmed baking sheet and set aside.

Place crushed cornflakes in a shallow dish. and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Remove chicken from buttermilk mixture, letting excess drip off, and place in corn flakes, turning to coat completely and gently pressing crumbs onto chicken. Transfer to the rack-lined baking sheet and repeat with the remaining chicken. Drizzle melted butter over chicken pieces.

Bake until golden and crispy and the internal temperature is 160°F, about 45 minutes.

MISO CHICKEN

4 servings

The mixture of unsalted butter and the salty umami deliciousness of Japanese miso paste is a great way of adding flavor to a simple weeknight meal. Here the mixture is spread over chicken thighs, which are then roasted till golden. This butter mixture is equally good on salmon and on corn or potatoes.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup white miso
- 2 tablespoons honey

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1 tablespoon rice vinegar (do not use seasoned rice vinegar)

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

8 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs, about 2 1/2 to 3 pounds

Heat oven to 425-degrees. Combine butter, miso, honey, rice vinegar and black pepper in a large bowl and mix with a spatula or spoon until it is well combined.

Add chicken to the bowl and massage the miso-butter mixture all over it. Place the chicken in a single layer in a roasting pan and slide it into the oven. Roast for 30 to 40 minutes, turning the chicken pieces over once or twice, until the skin is golden brown and crisp, and the internal temperature of the meat is 160 to 165 degrees.



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YAKITORI

(Japanese grilled chicken skewers)

Serves: 4

Grill these on medium-high heat on a barbeque grill, in a pan, under a broiler. If using wooden skewers soak them for at least an hour before using

3 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons mirin
2 tablespoons sake
1 tablespoon sugar
1-pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs, cut into bite sized pieces
Green onions cut into 1-inch lengths

Bring the soy sauce, mirin, sake and sugar to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer until the sauce thickens a bit, about 5 minutes, before letting it cool. Marinate the chicken in half of the sauce for at least 20 minutes. Skewer the chicken alternating with bite size pieces of green onion and grill until cooked, about 2-4 minutes per side, basting with the reserved sauce before enjoying.

CHICKEN AVOCADO SOUP

Serves 4 – 6

Yes, soup is often dinner. In this hearty Mexican inspired soup, I'm boosting the flavor of the broth by cooking the chicken in it. You can also add whatever vegetables you like to the soup. I like putting fresh spinach in the bottom of the bowl and pouring the hot soup over.

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
3 large cloves of garlic, peeled and chopped
5 cups homemade or low salt, defatted canned chicken broth
1 tablespoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican
1-pound boneless, skinless chicken breast or thighs
1-1/2 cups fresh or canned diced tomatoes in juice
2 small avocados, peeled, seeded and cut into 1/2 inch dice
3 tablespoons or so fresh lime or lemon juice
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Drops of your favorite hot sauce
1/4 cup roughly chopped cilantro leaves
Optional garnishes: Tortilla strips, sour cream or cotija cheese, diced zucchini, baby spinach

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and sauté the onions and garlic until lightly colored, about 3 minutes. Add the broth, oregano and the chicken. Bring to a boil and then turn down to a gentle simmer and cook covered 10 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to sit for 15 minutes to allow chicken to finish cooking.

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Remove the chicken from the pot and use 2 forks to shred the chicken. Place shredded chicken back in pot. Add the tomato, avocado and lime juice to soup. Let the soup sit for 5 minutes before serving. Season to your taste with lime juice, salt, pepper and drops of hot sauce. Stir in cilantro just before serving.



CHICKEN PICCATA

Serves 4

This is a classic American-Italian recipe that is easy and quick. Since it's done in one pan it makes cleanup a breeze. Great adapted to other meats like pork or turkey.

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2 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves, each 10 to 12 ounces each
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons olive oil
3 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
1/4 cup dry white wine
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice or to taste
1/3 cup chicken broth
2 tablespoon drained capers
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
1 tablespoon finely chopped chives

Butterfly the chicken breasts and cut them in half horizontally. Working with one breast half at a time, place the chicken between 2 pieces of plastic wrap and, using a meat pounder or other heavy, flat object like a skillet, gently pound to an even thickness of about 1/4 inch thick.

Season the chicken on both sides with salt and pepper. Place the flour in a shallow bowl and dredge the chicken in it. Shake off the excess.

In the nonstick fry pan over medium-high heat, warm 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Place 2 pieces of chicken in the pan and cook, turning once, until browned on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a platter or individual plates. Warm the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the pan and repeat with the remaining chicken.

Reduce the heat to medium and add 1 tablespoon butter in the pan. Add the shallot and cook until softened and lightly brown, about 1 minute. Add the wine, lemon juice and broth, increase the heat to medium-high and cook until the liquid is slightly reduced, about 5 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat and whisk in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter, the capers and parsley. Season to your taste with salt and pepper and additional drops of lemon juice if desired. Splash the sauce over the chicken and serve immediately topped with a sprinkling of chives.

CHICKEN LIVERS WITH BACON AND GINGER CREAM SAUCE

Serves 4 – 6

Growing up I used to love chicken liver (still do). For whatever reason we don't see them in the market so much anymore. They lend themselves to all kinds of preparations from quick sautés to rich pates. This dish could change your mind about these tender

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little morsels! The most important thing about cooking chicken livers (or any liver for that matter) is to be sure not to overcook. They should be lightly pink in the middle. Be sure to have the sauce made and toasts done before you cook the livers.

1-1/4 pounds fresh chicken livers
2 tablespoons olive oil
2/3 cup diced thick-sliced bacon or pancetta
Salt and freshly ground pepper
4 to 6 slices firm textured bread, toasted, crusts removed and cut attractively
2 cups moderately packed arugula leaves, large stems discarded
Ginger Cream Sauce (recipe follows)
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives

Rinse the livers with cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Trim away any membranes or greenish areas and set aside. Add the oil to a large non-stick sauté pan and heat over moderately high heat. Add the bacon and sauté till golden brown and crisp. Remove and drain on paper towels. Discard all but 2 tablespoons of the fat in the pan.

Season livers with salt and pepper and quickly brown on all sides until just cooked but still pink in the center. Place toasts in the middle of warm plates and top with the arugula. Place warm livers on top of this a spoon a little of the ginger sauce over the livers and the rest around the toasts. Sprinkle bacon and chives over all and serve immediately.

Ginger Cream Sauce

Makes about 1 cup

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh ginger
1 tablespoon packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup sherry vinegar
1/3 cup dry white wine, stock or apple juice
3/4 cup heavy cream
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Fresh lemon juice

Add ginger, sugar, vinegar and wine to a small saucepan and heat to boiling. Add the cream and bring it back to the boil. Stirring often reduce to about 1 cup, 6 – 8 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh strainer and season to your taste with salt, pepper and drops of lemon juice. Keep warm next to the stove.

Note: One other thought about chicken livers - - use livers that come from organically grown birds. Though hormones haven't been used with chickens for several decades, conventional growers do use antibiotics and feed their birds meat "by-products" which none of us need!

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QUICK CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

4 to 6 servings

This is great with rotisserie or any cooked chicken. If you can, try one of the popular Mexican melting cheeses including quesadilla, chihuahua, asadero or queso. You can also substitute Monterey Jack, mozzarella, or Muenster cheese.

One 15-ounce can refried beans (about 1 cup)
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
12 ounces (3 cups) shredded Mexican cheese such as Asadero or Monterey Jack cheese
1/2 rotisserie chicken, meat shredded (about 2 1/4 cups), bones and skin discarded
Freshly ground black pepper
One 16-ounce jar medium-spicy tomato salsa
1 cup chicken stock or water
Twelve 6-inch corn tortillas
Sour cream and pickled jalapenos, for serving

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Stir together the beans, oregano and 1 cup cheese in a bowl. Add the chicken, season with pepper and stir until evenly combined.

Stir the salsa together with 1 cup chicken stock in a bowl, then use 1 cup to cover the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Stack the tortillas, wrap them in damp paper towels and microwave until warm and pliable, about 15 seconds.

Arrange the tortillas on a workspace, then divide the chicken filling among the tortillas (about 1/4-cup filling per tortilla). Roll the tortillas up like a cigar, then transfer them to the baking dish seam-side down, positioning the rolls so that the dish is filled evenly. Press the rolls gently with your hands so they begin to soak the sauce up. Pour the remaining salsa mixture over the rolled tortillas, then sprinkle with the remaining 2 cups cheese.

Bake the enchiladas until the cheese melts and the enchiladas are hot in the center, about 30 minutes. Serve hot with sour cream and pickled jalapenos.

CHICKEN BREASTS WITH VINEGAR

Serves 4

This is one of those simple dishes that you can apply to any sauce of meats or fish. The reduction of the pan juices, a little stock and vinegar is so simple but so delicious. Try different vinegars to see which you prefer

4 chicken boneless, skin-on breasts, about 6 ounces each
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 tablespoons olive oil

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5 tablespoons butter
3 tablespoons finely chopped shallots or green onions
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
1/2 cup cider or white wine vinegar
1 cup chicken stock
1 tablespoon tomato paste
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh tarragon
2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley

Lightly season the chicken breasts with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil and 2 tablespoons of the butter over moderate heat in a sauté pan large enough to hold the breasts in one layer. Place the chicken in the pan skin side down and cook until golden brown. Turnover and cook till just done. Transfer chicken to a platter and keep warm.

Add the shallots and garlic to the pan and sauté till soft and just beginning to brown. Add the vinegar and stock and reduce over high heat until lightly thickened, about 3 minutes. Whisk in the tomato paste, any chicken juices for the platter and the remaining 3 tablespoons butter. Stir in herbs and add salt and pepper to taste. Pour pan sauce around chicken and serve immediately.

PAN SEARED CHICKEN BREASTS WITH WHITE WINE, MUSTARD AND CRÈME FRAICHE SAUCE

Serves 4

This is a simple recipe based on the classic French pan sauce technique. You could substitute some crushed green peppercorns for the mustard and any fresh herb of your choice for the tarragon. Crème fraiche is used here because it doesn't separate or "break" as heavy cream or sour cream often does and it has a wonderful tangy flavor.

1 tablespoon olive oil
4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 tablespoons finely chopped shallots
1/2 cup dry white wine such as Sauvignon Blanc
1/2 cup chicken stock
2 teaspoons grainy Dijon mustard
1/2 cup Crème Fraiche
2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon

Heat the oil in a sauté pan over moderately high heat. Add the chicken breasts in a single layer, season with salt and pepper and cook on both sides until chicken is golden and just cooked through about 4 minutes depending on thickness. Set aside and keep warm tented with foil.

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Add the shallots to the pan and cook over moderate heat until softened but not brown. Add the wine, stock and mustard and cook for 2 – 3 minutes until the liquid is reduced by half. Whisk in the crème fraiche and tarragon along with any juices from the chicken. Serve the chicken on warm plates topped with the sauce.



SIMPLE MARINATED AND ROASTED CHICKEN BREASTS

This is a favorite technique for simply and quickly roasting or grilling chicken breasts. I generally cook several breasts this way so that I can have them on hand to use in salads, pasta or other dishes that call for cooked chicken. It works equally well with chicken thighs and other meats like turkey breast or pork tenderloin. Also try this same marinade and approach with salmon steaks or fillets - - - delicious! Cooking times of course will need to be adjusted.

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3/4 cup soy sauce, salt reduced preferably

1/4 cup mirin

1 tablespoon Asian chile-garlic sauce

2 teaspoons toasted sesame oil

6 boneless and skinless chicken half breasts (3 whole breasts)

Combine the soy, mirin, chile-garlic sauce and sesame oil and marinate breast for at least 15 minutes and up to 2 hours. Arrange breast in a single layer in a lightly oiled baking dish and roast in a preheated 450-degree oven for 15 minutes or until meat is just cooked through and still juicy. Note if using bone-in breast you will need to increase cooking time 3 – 5 minutes more.

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