

Simple Roast Chicken

Makes 4 servings

Time: About 1 hour

We associate roast chicken with elegance, but it's also great weeknight food, since it takes just about 1 hour from start to finish. This method gives you a nicely browned exterior without drying out the breast meat, and it's easily varied. Use kosher or free-range chicken if at all possible.

1 whole (3- to 4-pond) chicken, trimmed of excess fat, then rinsed and patted dry with paper towels

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme, rosemary, marjoram, oregano, or sage leaves, or 1 teaspoon dried

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Chopped fresh herbs for garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 500°F.
2. Place the chicken, breast side up, on a rack in a roasting pan. Begin roasting. Mix together the olive oil, herb, salt, and pepper.
3. After the chicken has roasted for about 20 minute, spoon some of the olive oil mixture over it; baste every few minutes. When the bird begins to brown, turn the heat down to 325°F, baste again, and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reads 160° to 165°F. Total roasting time will be under an hour.
4. Before removing the chicken from the pan, tip the pan to let the juices from the bird's cavity flow into the pan (if they are red, cook another 5 minutes). Remove the bird to a platter and let it rest for about 5 minutes. While it is resting, pour the pan juices into a clear measuring cup, and poor or spoon off as much of the fat as you can. Reheat the juice, carve the bird, garnish, and serve with the pan juices.

Three ways to flavor roast chicken

1. Use 3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice in addition to or in place of olive oil.
2. Combine 2 tablespoons to 1/3 cup any mustard with 2 tablespoons honey and baste the chicken with the mixture during the final stages of roasting.
3. Place ½ cup white wine and two cloves crushed garlic in the bottom of the roasting pan; baste with this in addition to or in place of the olive oil mixture above