



Great Roast Chicken

We couldn't leave this recipe out of our cookbook. It's adapted from the well-regarded *Zuni Café Cookbook* by the late Judy Rodgers. The original recipe is three-plus pages in length and includes a fantastic amount of detail—it's a great read. We simplified her version, but kept the chicken-drying technique (over 1 to 3 days) that makes the result perfect. This is, by far, the best way to achieve the most tender and moist roasted bird. (NOTE: Our recipe uses a kosher chicken, which is pre-salted. Rodgers's guideline is to use $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon of salt per pound of chicken when the bird has not been pre-salted.)

This is a good dish for hosting a crowd because the prep work is done days in advance. You only need to increase the number of chickens and the ingredients proportionally. This dish has become so beloved in our families that even as our children begin to fly the coop (pun intended), this is one recipe that always goes with them.

SERVES 2 TO 4

One to 3 days before serving, remove any excess fat from the chicken, rinse, and pat dry inside and out. Starting at the cavity, slide a finger under the skin of each of the breasts, making 2 pockets. Create two more pockets under the skin at the thickest section of each thigh. Using a finger, push two herb sprigs into each of the 4 pockets.

Season the outside of the chicken with salt and pepper. Sprinkle a little of the salt inside the cavity. Leave uncovered and refrigerate for at least 1 day or up to 3.

Bring the chicken to room temperature. Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat it to 475°F.

Preheat a shallow roasting pan or heavy ovenproof skillet barely larger than the chicken over medium-high heat. Dry the chicken and set it breast side up in the pan.

Transfer the pan or skillet to the center rack of the oven and roast the chicken until it starts to brown, about 20 minutes. If the chicken hasn't browned, increase the temperature by 25 degrees and continue to roast until the skin is browned and blistered.

Roast another 10 minutes and turn the bird over. Continue to roast another 15 minutes, then turn the chicken back over to let the breast skin crisp, 5 to 10 minutes, until the juices run clear. Lift the chicken from the roasting pan and set on a cutting board or plate. Let rest for 10 minutes.

Cut the chicken into serving pieces, arrange on a warm platter, and serve. If you want to make a sauce to serve with the chicken, tilt the roasting pan and skim off the last of the fat. Place over medium-low heat, add any juice that has collected under the chicken, and bring to a simmer. Stir and scrape to soften any hard drippings and transfer to a gravy boat.

- 1 (2½-to-3-pound) chicken
- 8 (2-inch-long) sprigs fresh thyme, marjoram, rosemary, sage, or a combination
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper