

America's
TEST KITCHEN

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Crispy Roast Lemon Chicken

More than 30 chickens and 90 lemons later, we found that when it comes to great roast chicken, nothing beats a little squirt.

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Crispy Roast Lemon Chicken

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Serves 3 to 4

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If using a kosher chicken, skip the brining and begin with step 2. Broiling the fully roasted and quartered chicken skin-side up as it sits in a shallow pool of sauce crisps and browns the skin while keeping the meat succulent. If you decide to skip the broiling step, go directly from quartering the chicken to finishing the sauce with lemon juice, butter, and herbs.

INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup [table salt](#) or 1 cup [Diamond Crystal Kosher Salt](#) or 3/4 cup [Morton Kosher Salt](#)

1 [whole chicken](#) (3 1/2 to 4 pounds), trimmed of excess fat, giblets removed and discarded, chicken rinsed and patted dry

Cooking spray

2 [medium lemons](#)

6 medium cloves [garlic](#), crushed and peeled

4 tablespoons [unsalted butter](#) (1/2 stick), 2 tablespoons melted and the remaining 2 tablespoons chilled and cut into 2 pieces

Ground black pepper

1 3/4 cups [low-sodium chicken broth](#)

1 tablespoon [minced fresh parsley leaves](#)

1 tablespoon [minced fresh thyme leaves](#)

See Illustrations Below: [Sealing the Chicken Cavity](#)

1. Dissolve the salt in 2 quarts cold water in a large bowl, stockpot, or Dutch oven. Immerse the chicken in the brine and refrigerate 1 hour. Remove the chicken from the brine and pat dry with paper towels.
2. Adjust an oven rack to the lower-middle position; heat the oven to 375 degrees. Spray a V-rack with cooking spray and set in a flameproof roasting pan.
3. Cut 1 of the lemons lengthwise into quarters. Place the lemon quarters and garlic in the cavity of the chicken. Following the illustration below, thread a long wooden skewer through the flaps of skin on either side of the cavity. Turn the skewer and rethread back through the skin flaps.
4. Roast the chicken 40 minutes. Remove the roasting pan from the oven; increase the oven temperature to 450 degrees. Using 2 large wads of paper towels, rotate the chicken breast-side up; add 1 cup of the chicken broth to the roasting pan. Return the roasting pan to the oven and continue roasting until the thickest part of a thigh registers 165 to 170 degrees on an instant-read thermometer, about 35 to 40 minutes longer. Remove the roasting pan from the oven; tip the V-rack to let the juices from the chicken cavity run in to the roasting pan. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board and let rest, uncovered, while making the sauce. Remove the V-rack from the roasting pan.
5. Adjust the oven rack to the upper-middle position; heat the broiler. Skim the fat from the drippings in the roasting pan, add the remaining cup chicken broth, and set the roasting pan over high heat on a burner. Simmer the liquid, scraping the pan bottom with a wooden spoon to loosen the browned bits, until reduced to cup, about 4 minutes; set aside off heat.
6. Discard the lemons and garlic from the chicken cavity. Following the illustrations below, cut the chicken into quarters. Pour the accumulated chicken juices into the roasting pan, then place the chicken quarters, skin-side up, into the sauce in the roasting pan; broil the chicken until the skin is crisp and deep golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a serving platter.
7. Halve the remaining lemon lengthwise; squeeze the juice of one half into the roasting pan; cut the remaining half into 4 wedges and set aside. Whisk the remaining 2 tablespoons butter into the sauce until combined; stir in the parsley and thyme. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper to taste. Serve the chicken with the pan sauce and lemon wedges.

STEP BY STEP: Sealing the Chicken Cavity



Lemon, garlic, and herbs placed inside a chicken as it roasts can fall out when the bird is turned. In the test kitchen, we use a wooden skewer to sew the cavity shut. Holding the two flaps of skin together over the cavity with one hand, thread a long wooden skewer through both flaps about 1 inch down from the top of the cavity. Turn the skewer and rethread back through the flaps about 1/2 inch below the first stitch. Turn the skewer one last time and make the third stitch. Cut off the excess skewer with shears.

STEP BY STEP: Quartering the Chicken After Roasting



1. Cut into chicken where leg skin meets



breast.



3. Cut down along one side of breastbone, pulling breast meat away as you cut.

2. Pull leg quarter away from carcass. Cut through thigh joint to remove leg quarter.



4. Use knife to cut through wing joint. Repeat on second side to remove other leg and breast quarters.

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