Braised Chicken with Garlic, Herbs & Lemon

This recipe is adapted from *Fine Cooking* (3) originally by Jennifer McLagan. It uses a whole chicken rather than just thighs or breasts (yea!), braised with garlic and a wonderful lemon-herb combo. You could also use two game hens; butterfly or halve them for brining and braising.

Don't be off-put by all the garlic: remember that roasted garlic is wonderfully sweet and devoid of that acrid raw-garlic flavor. It can be squeezed out of its skin to be eaten with the chicken, or spread onto French baguette or other rustic bread such as ciabatta. I like to squeeze out a few garlic cloves into the reduced sauce, just before serving. For more on garlic, see *Making the most of garlic's two personalities* (4).

Most commercial paprika powder is devoid of flavor, so be sure to search out fresh and pungent Hungarian paprika. Mixing it in a bit of olive oil or butter before adding to the recipe helps bring out the flavor.

I like using *Preserved Meyer Lemon* (5), but you can also use a fresh lemon.

Serves 4.

**Notes on brining:**

See also: *How to Brine Chicken* (6), *Cornish Game Hens, Grouse, Pheasant & Other Small Fowl* (scroll to Brining section (6), and *Brining Poultry* (6)

I prefer to brine before cooking, to improve flavor and moisture retention. It will take a large container to allow the entire bird to be immersed in brine. I use my large stock pot, and pre-measure amount of water required to cover the bird, to calculate how much salt to use. You want 1 1/2 cup Morton kosher salt, or 1 cup table salt (not iodized) per gallon of water. Plan on 1 quart brine per pound of bird.

If you don't have room in your fridge for the large brining pot, set pot in a root cellar at 40° - 45° F. Be sure to keep the bird submerged, using a weighted plate if necessary.

Or you can cut the chicken into pieces and brine just the breasts.

NOTE: Try this recipe with other poultry, such as cornish game hens or wild game. Brine times: *(from Hunter Angler Gardener Cook blog (1), unless noted otherwise)*. Note that 2 game hens provide the same number of servings as 1 whole chicken.

- Chicken, grouse, quail & pheasant require: 4 - 12 hours or overnight (whole bird).
- Cornish game hens require 1 - 2 hours;
- Duck requires 2 - 2.5 hours (from Alton Brown’s Mighty Duck recipe(2))
Process:

1. Trim excess fat from cavity of chicken (I also remove the tail and glands at base of the tail because of the bitterness).

2. Brine whole chicken for at least 4 hours, or overnight; brine just breasts 30 min. Brine game hens 1 - 2 hours. Add a sprig each of thyme & rosemary and 1 - 5 Tbsp Rapadura sugar to the brine for whole chicken, if desired.

3. Meanwhile, remove papery skins from garlic, but do not remove peel.

4. Remove chicken from brine; Rinse and pat dry. Put juiced lemon half in the cavity (reserve juice). NOTE: if using cut up chicken, just add the juiced lemon to the braise (after searing).

5. Prepare chicken for roasting: cross legs & tie together; tuck wings under.

6. Oven braise: Use ovenproof pot, and position oven rack in lower third of oven; preheat to 400° F. Stove-top braise: Braise on stove-top in saucier, at a simmer. It may take longer for the meat to reach desired temperature.

7. Add paprika to oil and butter in pot; heat over medium high flame. Add chicken, breast-side down and cook until skin is browned, about 2 minutes. Turn and cook back and sides until browned, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate; if desired, pour off most of oil in pot.

8. Return pot to medium-high heat; add garlic and wine, stirring to deglaze.

9. Return chicken to pot, breast-side up on top of garlic. Add herbs, pour broth over chicken and bring to a boil. cover and
simmer, or transfer oven-proof pot to preheated oven. Cook, basting every 20 minutes, until thigh registers 160° F on instant-read thermometer. **Chicken** *(individual pieces)*: about 45 - 60 minutes (oven braise) or 100 minutes (stove-top braise). **Game Hens** *(butterflied or halved)*: 2 hours (stove-top braise).

10. Uncover & continue to cook chicken until thigh registers 165° to 170° F, and juices from the thigh run clear when thermometer is removed, about 10 minutes more.

11. Transfer chicken to cutting board, and garlic cloves to a serving platter, both covered loosely with foil to keep warm.

12. Strain braising liquid from the pot into a small saucepan, discarding herbs. Tilt pan so juices collect in one corner and spoon off as much fat as desired.

13. Squeeze out the pulp of several garlic cloves into the sauce. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Simmer until reduced to 3/4 cup, about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and some of the reserved lemon juice.

14. Carve chicken, transferring pieces to serving platter with the garlic. Serve with sauce and slices of baguette or other rustic bread.

**Assembly or Serving Ideas**

- Serve with spinach or other greens sautéed with sliced shallots then braised just until wilted. Season with coriander, salt and pepper. Crushed red pepper flakes can also be added if you want some heat. (see *Sautéed Spinach & Shallots* (6) for more detail).

- Baked butternut squash or yams is another fine accompaniment.

- Serve with salad of fresh garden greens, crumbled gorgonzola, and balsamic dressing.

**References:**

3. [finecooking.com/recipes/braised-chicken-forty-cloves-garlic.aspx](http://finecooking.com/recipes/braised-chicken-forty-cloves-garlic.aspx)