

THE DENVER POST ENTERTAINMENT

FOOD & DINING

Turn Sunday supper into weekday meals with a roasted chicken

By Rebecca Caro

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(Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post)

Not long ago, Sunday dinner was a time-honored tradition: We sat around the table sharing a hand-crafted meal. Stories were passed along with side dishes, the meal itself special and splendid. Today, we're long on to-do lists and short on time, but crave conviviality. Weekdays we work, schlep to activities, rush to prepare a passable dinner, finish homework, repeat. Weekends we run errands and forget to slow down. We don't have time, skill or energy to put into a complicated sit-down dinner.



(Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon, *The Denver Post*)

Enter the roast chicken, a Sunday dinner classic that couldn't be easier or more satisfying if it waltzed onto the table. The only thing it requires is an hour and a half with the oven on. In that time, you can be doing other things, say, laundry, watching football, reading that book-club book, playing with your kids.

You might even prepare a few simple side dishes and invite the neighbors over, because even though roast chicken is so simple, it's got the wow factor that makes it good enough to serve to guests.

Roast chicken's bonus is the leftovers. Some folks don't quite know what to do with those remainders. When I told my son's teacher, Mrs. Robinson, that I was working on an article about chicken, she said, "I never know what to do with day-old chicken! It's...yuck! What can I make with it?" Read on, Mrs. R., read on.

It's also a great budget saver. Leftover meat can be used to make lunch or dinner the next day, the bones thrown into a pot for stock — for the price of two 4-pound whole fryers purchased at Whole Foods at \$8 apiece, I made three solid meals for four people and the beginning of good midweek soup. I avoid wasting the leftover bones and bits, keeping in mind that the chicken who gave its life for my supper would appreciate being used as much as possible and not tossed in the trash. My travels have also taught me to use every bit. The bones we discard are a precious lifeline in some locales. Following are the recipes for Classic Roast Chicken, Fall Chicken Salad (apples and Brie on whole grain bread make a perfect seasonal lunch), Chicken and Chorizo Empanadas, Crock Pot Green Chile Chicken Stew, and Basic Chicken Stock. All except the chicken salad freeze well, too.

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Sunday Supper Chicken

This simple yet classic dish can be prepared a number of ways: some rub the skin with olive oil instead of butter; some add fresh herbs like rosemary, sage, or thyme under the breast skin or in the cavity. Other additions include putting two whole heads of garlic or two halved lemons in the cavity. The baking process absorbs the flavors, making a delicately flavored, succulent bird.

Ingredients

1 whole frying chicken, about 4 pounds

2 tablespoons butter, softened, or olive oil

Coarse salt and pepper

Lemon, garlic, herbs or any combination of these

Directions

With the oven rack in the middle position, preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Remove the gizzard packet, if present, from the bird's cavity, and pat the chicken dry with paper towels. Using your fingers, gently separate the skin on the breast and work the softened butter under the skin, distributing it evenly. Using any remaining butter, rub the breast skin, distributing the butter underneath and buttering the breast skin on the surface. If adding any fresh herbs, place them in the cavity or under the skin with the butter. Whole heads of garlic or halved lemons should be placed in the cavity. Liberally salt and pepper the chicken all over.



(Photos by Cyrus McCrimmon,
The Denver Post)

Place the chicken breast-side up in a roasting pan. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until a meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the breast reads 170 degrees. Remove the chicken from the oven, transfer to a carving board, and let rest for 15 minutes before carving and serving. Any juices from the pan can be used for making gravy, if desired.

Chicken Empanadas with Chorizo

This empanada filling freezes well for future use. Empanadas can be flash frozen on baking sheets, placed in storage bags and frozen. To bake, remove frozen empanadas and place on baking sheets, defrost one hour before baking. Makes one dozen empanadas.

Ingredients

3 tablespoons olive oil

1 onion, sliced into half moons

2 large garlic cloves, minced

¼ pound ground chorizo

1 teaspoon paprika

¼ cup sherry

½ cup chicken broth

3 cups chicken meat, shredded and/or diced

¼ cup pitted green olives, chopped

¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper, or to taste

2 tablespoons flour, optional

1 double pie crust, homemade or store-bought, rolled and refrigerated (I like Immaculate Baking Co. Pie Crust, available at Whole Foods, Safeway, others)

Flour

1 egg, lightly beaten with 1 tablespoon water (for egg wash)

Directions

In a medium skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Sauté onions and garlic in skillet, stirring frequently, until onions are softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the chorizo, paprika, and sherry, using a spatula to break the chorizo into small pieces. Cook, stirring, until mostly cooked through, about one minute. Add the broth, chicken and olives, and cook for about 15 minutes, until the ingredients have melded and the liquid has been absorbed and has thickened slightly. Season with salt and pepper. Add a couple of tablespoons of flour if needed to thicken the sauce and simmer a minute more, stirring. Cool filling until it is cool enough to handle.

Form the empanadas: Put oven racks in upper and lower thirds of oven and preheat oven to 400 degrees. Roll the pie crusts out onto a lightly floured surface with a lightly floured rolling pin to ¼ inch thick. Using the lip of a bowl or a 4-inch round cutter, form 12 rounds of dough for the empanadas. Ball up and roll out scraps to form additional rounds.

Spoon about 2 tablespoons filling onto center of a round and fold dough in half, enclosing filling and making a half-moon shape. Press edges together to seal, then crimp decoratively with your fingers or tines of a fork. Transfer empanada to a parchment- paper-lined baking sheet. Lightly brush empanadas with egg wash and bake in upper and lower thirds of oven, switching position of sheets halfway through baking, until golden, about 20 minutes. Transfer empanadas to a rack to cool 10 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Fall Chicken Salad Sandwich with Apples and Brie

Brie is delicious here, but cheddar and gorgonzola would be good choices, too. For an extra boost of fall flavor, add a smear of apple butter to the bread. Serves four.

Ingredients

3 cups chicken, cubed

2 ribs celery, chopped

2 scallions, minced

1 Granny Smith or Jonathan apple, cored and cut into chunks

1 tablespoon lemon juice

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

½ cup mayonnaise

Salt and pepper, to taste

Sliced Brie, or other cheese if desired

Lettuce leaves

Multigrain bread, such as Whole Foods' Se seduction Bread

Directions

In a medium bowl, combine the chicken, celery, scallions, apple, lemon juice, parsley and mayonnaise. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Assemble the chicken salad into a sandwich with the bread, lettuce, Brie and chicken salad.

Green Chile Chicken Stew

This stew is the ultimate Colorado-style comfort food. Freshly roasted Hatch green chiles are a classic Southwestern fall ingredient, but canned chiles also work well when fresh are not available. Some like to add corn, posole, bell peppers, or even potatoes to this stew, which is served over rice or with warm corn or flour tortillas. Serves 6.

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 pound fresh tomatillos, husked and rinsed
3 cups chicken broth
1 cup Hatch green chiles, diced
1 jalapeño pepper, stemmed, seeded and chopped
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
3 cups chicken, shredded into bite-size pieces
1 bunch cilantro

Directions

In a sauce pot, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until translucent, about 4 minutes. Add in the cumin and salt and stir to combine. Add the tomatillos and broth and cook until the tomatillos have softened and their skins crack, about 15 minutes. Let cool slightly, then blend in a blender or using a hand blender until ingredients are puréed. Add the jalapeño, cider vinegar and Hatch green chiles and return to the heat. Stir in the chicken and heat through. Garnish with fresh cilantro.



LITTLETON, CO. OCTOBER 3: Rebecca Caro shares a recipe for chicken,chorizo empanadas made from a roasted chicken on Friday, October 3, 2014. (Denver Post Photo by Cyrus McCrimmon) (Cyrus McCrimmon, THE DENVER POST)