

HOT BREAD KITCHEN CHEF DEMO: CHICKEN

Buying a Chicken

Learning about the types of chicken available in the supermarket can make you a better chicken cook. Chickens are first classified by age and weight. Young chickens are tender and cook quickly; older chickens need slow cooking to make them tender. For best results, it's important to know which type of chicken to buy.

Class	Description	Age	Weight	Cooking Method
Broiler-Fryers	Young with soft, smooth-textured skin; relatively lean; flexible breast bone.	7 to 13 weeks	1 1/2 to 3 1/2 pounds	Any cooking method, very versatile
Roasters	Young with tender meat and smooth-textured skin; breast bone is less flexible than broilers.	3-5 months	3 1/2 to 5 pounds	Any cooking method
Capons	Castrated roosters; tender meat with soft, smooth-textured skin; contains high proportion of light to dark meat and relatively high fat content.	Under 8 months	6 to 10 pounds	Roast
Stewing Hens	Mature female; flavorful, but less tender meat; nonflexible breastbone.	Over 10 months	2 1/2 to 8 pounds	Stew or Braise

Grading and Freshness

Check the package for the U.S.D.A. Grade A rating; chicken in most supermarkets should be government inspected. Look for secure, unbroken packaging, as well as a "sell-by" date stamp that indicates the last day the chicken should be sold.

Physically inspect the chicken before purchasing. Its skin should be creamy white to deep yellow; meat should never look gray or pasty. Odors could signal spoilage.

Storing and Handling Chicken

Fresh, raw chicken can be stored in its original wrap for up to two days in the coldest part of the refrigerator. However, freeze chicken immediately if you do not plan to use it within two days after purchasing. You can freeze most chicken in its original packaging safely for up to two months.

When handling raw chicken, you must keep everything that comes into contact with it clean. Raw chicken should be rinsed and patted dry with paper towels before cooking; cutting boards and knives must be washed in hot soapy water after using and hands must be scrubbed thoroughly before and after handling.

Why? Raw chicken can contain harmful salmonella bacteria. If bacteria are transferred to work surfaces, utensils or hands, they could contaminate other foods, as well as the cooked chicken, and cause food poisoning. With careful handling and proper cooking, this is easily prevented.

Whole Roasted Chicken

Serves 2-4

1 whole chicken (about 4 pounds)
1 medium onion, quartered
4 garlic cloves, crushed
2 lemons, halved
4 tablespoons softened butter, plus 2 tablespoons of melted butter for basting
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon salt

Preheat the oven to 450°F. Line a roasting pan with a rack for roasting the chicken or use large chunks of vegetables like onion, carrot, and celery to prop up the bird.

Season the Chicken: Trim the chicken of any excess or loose fat. Rinse with water, if desired, and dry the outside well. Season the outside of the chicken with salt and pepper, then generously season the inside cavity also.

Stuff the Chicken: Stuff the cavity tightly with the onion, garlic, and lemon, then place the bird breast-side-up on your work surface.

Truss (Tie-Up) the Chicken: Use a piece of kitchen twine to neatly tie the bird around the body securing the wings and legs in place. Cinch the ends of the string tightly around the bird, then tie a knot to keep the chicken in place.

Butter the Chicken: Using your hands, spread the softened butter all over the outside of the chicken. You can also add a few pieces of butter inside the breast by lifting the flap of skin and pushing the butter down into the breast. This will keep the white meat moist and flavorful.

Cook the Chicken: Set the chicken breast-side-up on top of the roasting rack or chopped vegetables, and roast for 20 minutes. The skin will begin to brown, but the inside of the chicken will remain mostly raw.

Take the chicken out of the oven, and baste it with some of the melted and return the pan to the oven. Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F and continue roasting the chicken for another 40 minutes, basting the chicken halfway through the cooking time.

After the chicken has cooked for 40 minutes at 350°F, take the chicken out to test for doneness using one of the methods indicated below.* If the chicken is not done, then baste it again with the

melted butter or the fat on the bottom of the pan. Return to the oven and check again for doneness every 10 or 15 minutes.

Rest the Chicken: Transfer the chicken to a serving platter or cutting board. Remove the string and let stand at least 10 minutes before carving so the chicken's juices will redistribute back into the bird.

***How to tell when the chicken is done.** Prick the thickest part of the drumstick with a fork. If the juices run clear yellow the chicken is done; if necessary, roast another 5 minutes and test again. As a final check, lift the chicken and drain the juices from its vent into the pan. If the last drops are clear yellow, it is definitely done. Or use an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh. It should read 160°F to 165°F when the chicken is done.