



Chicken 101: Maximizing Your Whole Chicken

A Fresh Fork Market production,
Featuring Chef Parker Bosley

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Introduction: By Parker Bosley

It's not about having a chicken in every pot. It's equally important to know what kind of chicken is in the pot.

The poultry vocabulary today is both informative and confusing and even false in some cases. Pastured, raised on grass, vegetarian diets, cage free, no antibiotics, hormone free, air chilled...

Meat birds and layers are terms we can understand. Chicken raised for meat are about eight weeks old when they are processed. Layers are hens that begin laying eggs when they are seven or eight months old. Hens are chosen for efficiency in egg production, color of the egg shell, and size of the eggs. Some breeds produce white eggs, some produce brown eggs and some produce in a variety of pastel-like colors.

Ideally both meat birds and laying hens should be raised on the ground. It is their nature to peck and scratch and select parts of the diet from nature.

The best way, perhaps the only way, to know how the poultry you purchase is produced is to know the source.

Learning to "take apart" the whole chicken brings economy and creativity to your kitchen. Purchased separately—boneless breast, leg, thighs, wing, liver and carcass—add up to a pricey bird. Purchasing the whole bird and separate it yourself is much more economical.

There are four major pieces you can remove from the carcass--the breast portions and the leg and thigh pieces (one on each side of the bird, making it easy to quarter a bird). Cornish-cross chickens, which are the most popular in local production, that are over five pounds can provide several meals from one chicken. One breast portion from a large chicken can serve two people. The leg and thigh pieces can be separated to create four portions. So if we consider that the quartered chicken can be halved again, each chicken serves about 8 people with fresh meat and the carcass can then be recycled to make soup or stock.

And there is more! Each time you butcher your chicken put the wings in a plastic zip lock which you should keep in the freezer. You can eventually make chicken wings. Also, save the livers in the freezer. Six or seven chicken livers will make a lovely mousse that you can serve as an hors d'oeuvre.

Butchering, breaking down, separating parts are terms used in "cutting up" a whole chicken. The following are all part of that process. You can do as much of the process as you choose. Removing the wish bone and boning-out a whole leg-thigh are options.

Looking at it this way, each change you make will increase the options for cooking and for carving. You can roast, grill or braise a whole thigh-leg. If you separate the two parts you can make a dish using the thigh and still something completely different with the leg. If you take the bone out of the whole leg-thigh you can stuff it and roast it which would result in still another kind of dish and presentation.

These are all things we'll review in today's class. Should you find yourself in need of assistance after the class, please feel free to post on the Fresh Fork Market blog (www.freshforkmarket.com) or on the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/freshforkmarket).

Agenda: 6:00 PM

Part 1: Discussion about chickens, production methods, and fresh vs frozen

Part 2: Cutting Techniques, a whole chicken (as demonstrated by Parker Bosley)

- Quartering the bird
- Deboning a leg/thigh
- Trimming the breast
- Trussing the bird
- Airline chicken breast

Part 3: Recipes and cooking techniques

Part 4: Hands-on cut your own chicken

Part 5: Recipe sampling, questions and answer

Recipe 1: Roasting a Whole Chicken

Nearly every direction is optional. You will have to have an oven. True. But the time, the seasoning, the temperature and other suggestions are variations. Keep in mind that the final product is for you and the others at the dinner table and roasting system you will master must please them.

I prefer to truss (tie with string) the chicken. I like to put a piece of onion, carrot, and celery in the cavity along with a bay leaf and some dried thyme. I rub the chicken with olive oil and season it with salt and pepper. Start the roasting at 450 degrees. About ¼ of the total cooking time will be at 450. If the roasting time is one hour, the first fifteen minutes will be at 450 and then the heat is lowered to 350.

Throughout the roasting time I brush the chicken with soft butter several times.

Your goal is to develop a roasting method that pleases you. The kind of pan you use, your oven, your preference of the weight of the chicken will all determine your method of roasting the chicken.

FAQs and Variations:

Do I cook covered or uncovered?

I prefer uncovered. This provides a crispy skin. Roasting is a dry cooking method. If you cook covered, it is considered a braised chicken. It won't crisp up due to the steam around it. The skin will be soft and less appealing.

If you want to braise your chicken, use the same techniques and seasonings. Cook the chicken covered at 350 degrees. In the last 15 minutes, remove lid and crank the heat up to allow the skin to get crisp.

What if I have a convection oven?

A convection oven uses a fan to blow air around to allow more efficient cooking. You'll need to reduce your cooking time by about 15 to 20 minutes.

Do I need to baste the chicken?

No, you don't need to baste the bird with the pan juices (although it won't hurt). But an easier way is to brush the bird with melted butter.

At what temperature should I remove the chicken from the oven?

Stick the thermometer in the thickest part of the breast and into the thickest part of the thigh. Remove the bird from the oven when the temperature is around 150 to 155 degrees. The bird will continue to cook once removed from the oven.

Another way to check is to cut the skin by the thigh and make sure the juices run clear.

Will it continue to cook after removing from the oven?

Yes, the bird will continue to cook once removed from the oven. Wait about 15 minutes before carving.

Can I use the pan drippings for anything?

Oh yes. Yep, yep! There are several options here.

First, you can scrape them out into a dish and refrigerate. Once cold, the fat will separate and you can skim off the fat. Use the remaining pan juices over the meat.

You can also use the pan juices and add them back to stock, fat and all. Once the stock has cooked, you can cool the stock and skim the fat off then.

How many minutes per lb should I cook the chicken?

Approximate cooking time is 17 to 20 minutes per lb. Check it often though towards the end to make sure you don't overcook the chicken.

Recipe 2: Roast Chicken with Balsamic Vinegar and Rosemary

Heat the oven to 450 degrees. Truss the chicken with kitchen string. Rub the chicken with olive oil. Place the chicken breast side up in the shallow roasting pan.

For a five lb chicken roast for 20-25 minutes at 450 degrees and then lower the heat to 350. Total roasting time will be about 1 hour 30 minutes. For larger birds increase the initial 20 minutes to one half hour and the total roasting time to about 1 hour and 45 minutes or 2 hours. The chicken will continue to cook after it is removed from the heat. Let it rest for 15 to 20 minutes.

Midway in the roasting, season the chicken with salt and pepper. During the roasting use a brush to paint the chicken with melted butter several times.

While the chicken is roasting, mince rosemary to yield 2 tablespoons. Mix the herbs with 1/3 cup of Balsamic vinegar. Carve the chicken and serve warm or serve later at room temperature. Do not refrigerate the chicken even if you are not serving it until three or four hours later. Use the Balsamic-rosemary to sprinkle over the chicken. Refrigerate the remaining part of the chicken for use in chicken salad or for sandwiches.

Recipe 3: Roasting Whole Bone-in Chicken Breasts

Ingredients:

- 2 whole chicken breasts, both sides of the front part of the chicken
- 1 tbs minced shallot
- 1 tbs fresh herbs (usually thyme, minced rosemary, or minced sage)
- 1 tbs butter
- Salt and pepper to taste

Mince the shallots and herbs. Mix with some salt and pepper in a small bowl. On the cutting board, spread out softened butter, much like you are buttering bread. Make an infused butter paste by sprinkling the herbs, shallots, salt, and pepper across the butter. Scrape the mixture back together with your knife and repeat several times until the butter and herbs are well mixed. Remove this from the cutting board to a bowl and refrigerate, or use immediately on the chicken breasts.

From the front of the whole breast, at the neck, force the butter-herb mixture under the skin. Slide the mixture over the meat. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Roast the whole breast in a 450 degree oven for 10 minutes. Lower the heat to 350 degrees and bake the chicken for about 35-40 minutes.

Remove the chicken from the oven and let it rest for 10 minutes on the cutting board. Carefully remove the meat from the bone. You can serve the breast whole or slice it. Slice the two halves and you can serve four people.

Recipe 4: Chicken Baked in Tomato Sauce

Ingredients:

2 chicken thighs

2 chicken legs

2 tbs butter or olive oil or a combination of the two

2 tsp dried thyme

1 bay leaf

1 cup each of carrot, onion, and celery, diced

1 large garlic clove peeled and mashed

2 cups canned, chopped tomatoes or 4 fresh tomatoes, chopped

Salt and pepper

Use a saute pan or a baking dish that can be move from the stove top to the oven. Heat the oil/butter to medium high. Season the chicken pieces and brown them slowly. Adjust the heat to prevent burning.

When the pieces when they are browned and set aside. Add the vegetables and herbs to the pan. You may have to add a little more butter or oil. Saute the vegetable for about 10 minutes. Chop the fresh tomatoes into quarters if using or add the canned tomatoes and smashed a bit. Add the thyme, garlic and bay leaf.

Return the chicken pieces to the pan and bake for about 45 minutes at 350.

To finish: Turn off the oven. Remove the chicken pieces and keep warm. Pass the tomatoes and vegetables through a food mill. Serve with noodles. In the winter this dish is great with polenta.

Cook ahead if you like. You could refrigerate this dish and then reheat it the next day.

You could skip the food mill process and serve it like a stew.

Recipe 5: Stuffed Chicken Breast for Picnic

Ingredients;

4 chicken breasts, first wing joint attached

4 oz goat cheese (chevre) or cream cheese (or the two combined)

1 cup shredded carrot

1 tbs minced shallot or green onion

Minced fresh rosemary or sage, about 1 tablespoon or to taste

Salt and pepper

Mix all ingredients in a bowl using a fork to mash the cheese(s). Season to your taste. Add more salt and pepper and herbs if you choose.

Butter or oil baking tray and sprinkle it well with salt and pepper. Lay the chicken breasts skin side up on the tray. Carefully pull back the skin leaving it connected to the meat on one side. Season the meat with salt and pepper. Cover each breast with $\frac{1}{4}$ of the cheese mixture. Now carefully return the skin to cover the mixture. Refrigerate to chill the chicken breasts.

Brush the skin with melted butter or oil. The butter or oil will hold well if the surface of the breast is cold. (You can make it to this point and then refrigerate.)

Season with salt and pepper. Place the tray with the chicken breast under the broiler. Watch carefully. Turn the tray. Brown the skin. Don't worry if there are a few blisters and some blackened spots.

Remove the tray from the broiler and set the oven temperature at 350. Return the chicken to the middle of the oven and bake until the flesh is firm—20 minutes to $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. You can serve the chicken hot if you like.

For a summer picnic dish, let the chicken cool and refrigerate it. Cover with plastic. If you are doing these one or two days in advance, wrap each piece in plastic.

I love this dish when I travel in the country. I usually do some boiled potatoes with olive oil and lots of fresh herbs to serve with it.

This is a great "theme and variation" recipe. Most any soft cheese will do. You could pre-cook and cool some Italian sausage and use that instead of cheese. Leeks, zucchini and arugula work well.

You could also make your favorite bread stuffing and place it under the skin of the chicken breasts.

Keep it simple. Choose several of your favorite herbs. Mince the herbs with butter, lemon zest and a very little minced garlic.

Recipe 6: Roasting the Double Breast on the Bone

Still another way to enjoy roast chicken is to prepare only half the bird. This works when preparing dinner for three or four people. The total roasting time will be about 30 minutes.

1 double breast of chicken, wings, back bone and wish bone removed
1 TBS soft butter
1 TBS finely minced fresh herbs, any combination
1 TBS minced shallot or red onion
Salt and pepper

Mix the herbs and shallot with the butter in a small bowl. Make sure these are completely combined. Starting near the neck, carefully stuff the butter-herb mixture under the skin. Place in the refrigerator until ready to roast.

Heat the oven to 450 degrees. Brush the skin of the chicken with olive oil and/or butter. Place in a shallow roasting pan and roast for about ten minutes. Reduce the heat to 350 and finish roasting. Depending on the size the total roasting time will be from 30 to 45 minutes.

Let the chicken rest for five or ten minutes before carving it. Using the boning techniques as in breaking down the whole chicken, remove the meat from the bone. Lay the two halves on the cutting board and slice across.

Recipe 7: Basic Formula for Creating Rich Stock

This is a truly an art and requires time. Parker's stock is truly amazing. He knows this and stock is what I get as a Christmas gift! Best gift ever. Anyhow, Parker has been generous enough to share his technique with us. Enjoy. Trevor

Day One:

Making basic meat, poultry, fish and vegetable stocks requires time, appropriate ingredients and attentiveness. Bones, vegetables, herbs, wine and water and a good stock pot will produce the product that enhances any dish in which stock is included.

Rich stock is the final product that you will store in the freezer and then use in making sauces and soups. The entire process—from bones and vegetable to rich stock—will require a least two days. You will need a day to make the stock and an over night cooling to concentrate the fat. On the second day you can remove the fat that has risen to the top and then boil the stock to evaporate water and concentrate the flavor that will then be labeled rich stock.

I will use an eight quart stock pot in explaining the process in which I can place about three pounds of bone—chicken, beef and/or pork in any combination or all of the same kind. A combination of bones is

a good way to begin. As you become comfortable in making stock and add your own ideas to the process you will most likely want to do specific kinds for your cooking.

To the bones you should add a branch of celery, an onion, a carrot (peeled) and a clove of garlic (crushed). Chop the carrot, onion and celery. Have ready a couple branches of parsley, some dried thyme and a bay leaf.

Add enough water to cover the bones and vegetables by two or three inches. Raise the heat to high. When the stock begins to boil skim it to remove the scum and impurities. Don't worry about remove too much water. It is only water at this point and you can add more. When the stock begins to clear, lower the heat to medium or medium low. Adjust the heat to a point at which there are occasional bubbles but not a rolling boil. Add the thyme, parsley and bay leaf.

Cook the stock for four or five hours. Add water to keep the level above the bones.

After the stock has simmered for several hours the meat should fall from the bones and the vegetables should be very soft. Remove the stock pot from the heat and let it cool to room temperature.

Strain the stock through a damp cloth. An old terry-cloth towel works very well. Refrigerate the stock overnight. The next day you can remove all the fat that has come to the top. A tall, narrow container is best as the fat will be more concentrated and easier to remove.

Day Two:

When the fat has been removed return the stock to a stock pot and boil it. Skim the stock and reduce the heat to medium. Reduce the stock by half. If you began with two gallons of water you should have a final yield of about one gallon.

When the stock has cooled, ladle it into plastic containers and freeze it for future use. In our recipes, this final product is referred to as rich stock. You may prefer to freeze some of the stock as broth—not reduce—which is appropriate for soups.

As your stock making skills improve and what now seem rather daunting, you will want to create many kinds. Lamb stock is a special stock that is used for bean soups and lamb dishes.

Rabbit stock and duck stock are especially good.

NOTES:

There should be some meat on the bones. Large beef knuckle bones are not a good choice. Neck bones are excellent. Chicken wings and necks are good. Pork neck bones or a couple of pigs' feet are good. The bones should be in small pieces—two of three inches wide.

You may choose to brown the bones before making the stock. You can do this in a 350 degree oven or you can set the stock pot over medium heat and brown the bone with a little butter and or oil. Use oil that is neutral, without flavor. Stir the bones often whether using the oven method or the stock pot. Do not allow the bones or the meat to burn since this will cause the stock to be bitter.

Deglaze the pan or roasting pan in which you browned the bones and/or the vegetables. A cup of dry vermouth works very well for this. As your stock making repertoire becomes more complex you may choose specific wines for the deglazing process. Riesling goes well with pork. Red wine with beef bones is quite good.

If you are making chicken stock you may want to brown the vegetables in butter before adding them to the stock pot.

I do not add salt or pepper to the stock. Season should occur when the rich stock is used for sauces and soups.