

Chicken Provençal with Saffron, Orange, and Basil

SERVES Serves 4



WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

The best chicken Provençal recipe would produce a dish with meltingly tender, moist, and flavorful chicken, napped in an aromatic, garlicky tomato sauce that could be mopped up with a thick slice of crusty bread. To achieve this ideal, we used chicken thighs for their tender texture and a combination of canned diced tomatoes and tomato paste for the sauce. We seasoned the dish with fresh herbs in addition to the traditional herbes de Provence, as well as with grated lemon zest and pitted niçoise olives, for a chicken Provençal recipe we could be proud of.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 3 pounds), trimmed of excess skin and fat
- table salt
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped fine (about 2/3 cup)
- 6 medium cloves garlic, pressed through garlic press or minced (about 2 tablespoons)

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- * This dish is often served with rice or slices of crusty bread, but soft polenta is also a good accompaniment. Niçoise olives are preferred; other olives are too potent.

- 1 anchovy fillet, minced (about 1 teaspoon)
- ⅛ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup dry white wine
- ⅛ teaspoon saffron
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 can diced tomatoes (14 1/2 ounces)
- 2 ½ tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 ½ tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano leaf
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon herbes de Provence (optional)
- 1 ½ teaspoons grated orange zest
- ½ cup niçoise olives, pitted
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil

INSTRUCTIONS

1 Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position; heat oven to 300 degrees. Sprinkle both sides of chicken with salt. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking. Add 4 chicken thighs, skin-side down, and cook without moving them until skin is crisp and well browned, about 5 minutes. Using tongs, turn chicken pieces and brown on second side, about 5 minutes longer; transfer to large plate. Add remaining 4 chicken thighs to pot and repeat, then transfer to plate and set aside. Discard all but 1 tablespoon fat from pot.

2 Add onion to fat in Dutch oven and cook, stirring occasionally, over medium heat until browned, about 4 minutes. Add garlic, anchovy, and cayenne; cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add wine and saffron and scrape up browned bits from pan bottom with wooden spoon. Stir in chicken broth, tomatoes, tomato paste, thyme, oregano, bay, and herbes de Provence (if using). Remove and discard skin from chicken thighs, then submerge chicken in liquid and add accumulated chicken juices to pot. Increase heat to high, bring to simmer, cover, then set pot in oven; cook until chicken offers no resistance when poked with tip of paring knife but still clings to bones, about 1 1/4 hours.

3 Using slotted spoon, transfer chicken to serving platter and tent with foil. Discard bay leaf. Set Dutch oven over high heat, stir in 1 teaspoon orange zest, bring to boil, and cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened and reduced to 2 cups, about 5 minutes. Stir in olives and cook until heated through, about 1 minute. Meanwhile, mix remaining 1/2 teaspoon zest with basil. Spoon sauce over chicken, drizzle chicken with remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil, sprinkle with basil and orange zest mixture, and serve.