

Lemon Chicken with Pasta and Vegetables

Our Young Chefs, 2015

Makes 6 to 8 servings



Chicken brightened with lemon and fresh vegetables - this dish is sunshine on a plate! Feel free to shake it up and switch out one or more of the vegetables - try broccoli, asparagus, snow or snap peas, fresh tomato or yellow squash. Like spicy heat? Add a little crushed red pepper to the lemon/garlic marinade. Leftovers make the base for a quick pasta salad.

INGREDIENTS

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts,
 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices cut into 1-inch lengths

3 cloves garlic, finely diced, grated OR
passed through a garlic press

2 lemons

CHICKEN MARINADE

Half of the lemon juice (*just prepared*)

Grated zest (*just prepared*)

Diced or grated garlic (*prepared above*)

2 to 3 tablespoons dry sherry,
vermouth OR white wine

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons fresh thyme leaves,
diced OR $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon (generous)
dried

thyme leaves

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried basil

2 zucchini, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slice, quarter or
halve the slices

1 cup red or green bell pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch
slice lengthwise; cut crosswise into
1-inch lengths

1 cup celery, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch crosswise slice

$\frac{1}{2}$ large sweet onion, $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slice
lengthwise; cut crosswise into 1-inch lengths

DIRECTIONS

Prepare the chicken: Slice the chicken breasts across the grain of the meat into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices. Cut across the chicken slices into 1-inch lengths to create bite-sized pieces; set aside.

Prepare the chicken marinade: Prepare the garlic by one of three methods: finely dice with a knife, grate using a microplane OR pass through a garlic press.

Zest and juice the lemons: Grate the zest* of 1 of the lemons using a microplane zester OR the "spikey" holes on a grater. Juice/squeeze both lemons; set aside $\frac{1}{2}$ of the lemon juice amount to be added just before serving. Place the other half of the lemon juice in a glass bowl OR gallon zipclose bag (to marinate the chicken).

Marinate the chicken: Add the lemon zest, garlic, sherry, thyme and basil, along with the raw chicken slices. Stir to blend; if using a zipclose bag, seal, massage the contents of the bag, turning as needed to blend. Marinate the chicken at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Prepare the vegetables: Wash the zucchini, bell pepper and celery under cool running water; use a vegetable brush when washing the zucchini. Pat dry. Cut the zucchini, bell pepper, celery and onion as described into bite-sized pieces. It is important to make all of the vegetables similar in size; this will insure they are all finished cooking at the same time.

* **Zest** is the colored layer of the peel of any citrus fruit - lemons, limes, orange and grapefruit. When grating the zest, remove only the colored layer. **Avoid** grating into the white layer of the peel (the pith), as it has a bitter flavor. Grating into the pith/white layer will impart that bitter character to the recipe.

<p>4 to 6 quarts water 2 teaspoons salt 12 ounces pasta - any short-cut pasta shape <u>OR</u> spaghetti</p>	<p>Prepare the pasta: While preparing the vegetables, heat the water in a large pot, covered, over high heat. When the water comes to a rolling boil, add the salt; stir. Cook the desired pasta shape according to the package directions, just until <i>al dente</i>.† Drain.</p>
<p>2 tablespoons olive oil</p>	<p>Prepare to cook the chicken and vegetables: Preheat the oven to 200°F. Heat a large heavy skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat until the pan is hot, 2 to 3 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil; let it heat for a minute. Swirl the olive oil around the pan.</p>
<p>Sliced chicken breast (<i>prepared earlier</i>) $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt Freshly ground pepper</p>	<p>Sauté the chicken: Arrange the chicken pieces <i>in a single layer</i> in the hot skillet; season with salt and pepper. Cook on medium heat until the underside of the chicken is seared and golden, 3 to 5 minutes. (<i>Resist the urge to stir</i> or the chicken will not brown.) Turn the chicken pieces over; sear the other side to a golden brown color, 3 to 5 minutes. <i>Do not over-cook</i>. Remove the chicken to a platter or bowl, cover with foil; set aside in a 200°F oven.</p>
<p>1 tablespoon cornstarch 1 cup chicken stock <u>OR</u> broth</p>	<p>Prepare the sauce: While the chicken is cooking, in a small bowl, stir the cornstarch into the chicken stock/broth; set aside.</p>
<p>2 tablespoons olive oil Sliced vegetables (<i>prepared earlier</i>) $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt Freshly ground pepper</p>	<p>Sauté the vegetables: After the chicken is removed from the skillet, wipe the skillet lightly with a paper towel; return the skillet to the heat. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil; heat until it shimmers but does not smoke. Add the prepared vegetables, salt and pepper; stir fry for 3 to 4 minutes.</p>
<p>Broth/cornstarch mixture (<i>prepared earlier</i>)</p>	<p>Thicken the sauté mixture: Add the sauce mixture to the skillet, stirring over medium-high heat until the sauce boils and thickens.</p>
<p>Warm cooked chicken (<i>prepared earlier</i>) Remaining lemon juice (<i>prepared earlier</i>) Salt, pepper, dried thyme <u>OR</u> basil, to taste</p>	<p>Stir in the remaining ingredients: Add the cooked chicken to the vegetables and sauce in the skillet; stir over medium heat until the chicken is hot. Stir in the reserved lemon juice. Taste; <i>add additional</i> salt, pepper or dried herbs, to taste.</p>
<p>Hot cooked pasta (<i>prepared earlier</i>) GARNISH $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh parsley <u>OR</u> fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped</p>	<p>Assemble, garnish and serve: Serve over the hot pasta; GARNISH with a generous sprinkle of fresh parsley <u>OR</u> basil. Serve immediately.</p>

† *Al dente* is an Italian phrase (pronounced *al den'tā*) that describes pasta cooked firm to the bite or a slightly chewy texture -- literally translated, "to the tooth". To accomplish this it is generally recommended that dry pasta be cooked *1 to 1½ minutes less* than what is recommended on the pasta package.