

Lemon Chicken with Pasta and Vegetables

Our Young Chefs, 2015

Makes 20 snack-size 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

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

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

3 lemons

CHICKEN MARINADE

Half of the lemon juice (*just prepared*)

Grated zest (*just prepared*)

Diced or grated garlic (*prepared above*)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry sherry, vermouth OR
white wine

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

1 teaspoon dried basil

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

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

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

1 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 2 of the lemons using a microplane zester OR the "spikey" holes on a grater. Juice/squeeze all 3 of the 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.

6 to 8 quarts water
1 tablespoon salt
1½ pounds pasta - any short-cut
pasta shape OR spaghetti

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 *al dente*.† Drain.

2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil

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.

Sliced chicken breast (*prepared earlier*)
½ teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper

Sauté the chicken: Arrange the **chicken** pieces *in a single layer* 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. (*Resist the urge to stir* or the **chicken** will not brown.) Turn the **chicken** pieces over; sear the other side to a golden brown color, 3 to 5 minutes. *Do not over-cook*. Remove the **chicken** to a platter or bowl, cover with foil; set aside in a 200°F oven.

2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 cups chicken stock OR broth

Prepare the sauce: While the **chicken** is cooking, in a small bowl, stir the **cornstarch** into the **chicken stock/broth**; set aside.

2 to 3 tablespoons olive oil
Sliced vegetables (*prepared earlier*)
¾ teaspoon salt
Freshly ground pepper

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.

Broth/cornstarch mixture
(*prepared earlier*)

Thicken the sauté mixture: Add the **sauce** mixture to the skillet, stirring over medium-high heat until the sauce boils and thickens.

Warm cooked chicken (*prepared earlier*)
Remaining lemon juice (*prepared earlier*)
Salt, pepper, dried thyme OR
basil, to taste

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; *add additional* **salt**, **pepper** or **dried herbs**, to taste.

Hot cooked pasta (*prepared earlier*)
GARNISH

Assemble, garnish and serve: Serve over the hot **pasta**; **GARNISH** with a generous sprinkle of **fresh parsley** OR **basil**. Serve immediately.

½ cup fresh parsley OR fresh basil leaves, coarsely chopped

† *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.
