

PERFECT ROAST CHICKEN



Roast chicken is one of those classic things that everyone loves, but not everyone has the confidence to cook. Once you've learnt how to check your chicken is properly cooked and tasted how delicious a home-cooked bird is, hopefully this will be a recipe you'll use for life. Having learnt the things I've learnt about chickens over the last few years, of course I'm going to suggest that you buy free-range or organic. But if you're a little tight for cash, the RSPCA Freedom Food chickens are very good and available in most supermarkets.

Jamie's top tips

- This method for roasting your bird on a bed of vegetables can also be used for other meat such as pork, beef or lamb.
- To check whether a roast chicken is fully cooked, poke the thickest part of the chicken, near the joint where the thigh meets the backbone with a paring knife – if the juices run clear, not pink, the chicken is done.
- Letting the chicken rest after taking it out of the oven is very important—it makes for a much juicier, tender bird.

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Serves 6

1 x approximately 1.6kg chicken, preferably free-range, organic or higher welfare
2 medium onions
2 carrots
2 sticks of celery
1 bulb of garlic
olive oil
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 lemon
a small bunch of fresh thyme, rosemary, bay or sage, or a mixture

Equipment list

Knife
Chopping board
Roasting tray
Spoon
Tin foil
Tea towel

To prepare your chicken:

1. Take your chicken out of the fridge 30 minutes before it goes into the oven. Preheat your oven to 240°C/475°F/gas 9.
2. There's no need to peel the vegetables – just give them a wash and roughly chop them. Break the garlic bulb into cloves, leaving them unpeeled. Pile all the veg and garlic into the middle of a large roasting tray and drizzle with olive oil.
3. Drizzle the chicken with olive oil and season well with salt and pepper, rubbing it all over the bird. Carefully prick the lemon all over, using the tip of a sharp knife (if you have a microwave, you could pop the lemon in there for 40 seconds at this point as this will really bring out the flavour). Put the lemon inside the chicken's cavity, with the bunch of herbs.

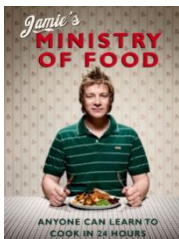
To cook your chicken:

4. Place the chicken on top of the vegetables in the roasting tray and put it into the preheated oven. Turn the heat down immediately to 200°C/400°F/gas 6 and cook the chicken for 1 hour and 20 minutes.
5. If you're doing roast potatoes and veggies, this is the time to crack on with them – get them into the oven for the last 45 minutes of cooking.
6. Baste the chicken halfway through cooking and if the veg look dry, add a splash of water to the tray to stop them burning.

7. When cooked, take the tray out of the oven and transfer the chicken to a board to rest for 15 minutes or so. Cover it with a layer of tinfoil and a tea towel and put aside while you make your gravy and bread sauce.

To carve your chicken:

8. Remove any string from the chicken and take off the wings (break them up and add to your gravy for mega flavour). Carefully cut down between the leg and the breast. Cut through the joint and pull the leg off. Repeat on the other side, then cut each leg between the thigh and the drumstick so you end up with four portions of dark meat. Place these on a serving platter. You should now have a clear space to carve the rest of your chicken. Angle the knife along the breastbone and carve one side off, then the other. When you get down to the fussy bits, just use your fingers to pull all the meat off, and turn the chicken over to get all the tasty, juicy bits from underneath. You should be left with a stripped carcass, and a platter full of lovely meat that you can serve with piping hot gravy and some delicious veg.



Adapted from *Jamie's Ministry of Food*

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www.jamieoliver.com/jamies-ministry-of-food