

COOKING SKILLS

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

8 Chapters

Philip Osztromok

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COOKING SKILLS: CHICKEN 1

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Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 1 · Know Your Chicken

SKILL GOAL

Buy, store and handle raw chicken safely, and learn when it is cooked and still juicy.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Chicken is cheap and quick, but it is the meat where mistakes matter most, in both directions: too little cooking is a health risk, too much leaves it dry and stringy. Learn the cuts first. **Breast** is lean and cooks in 20 to 25 minutes but dries out fast. **Thighs** have more fat and connective tissue, so they stay juicy and are hard to overcook. **Drumsticks** are cheap and good for glazes, and **wings** crisp up beautifully. Bone-in, skin-on pieces are the most forgiving and the tastiest.

The only reliable test is a **probe thermometer:** 75°C in the thickest part. A chicken breast that reaches 75°C and is rested is moist; one taken to 85°C is dry. Buy chicken by the use-by date, keep it cold, and check the safety box before you do anything else. Cooking Skills: Knife Skills 1, chapter 7 shows how to joint a chicken; this course starts with the pieces already cut.

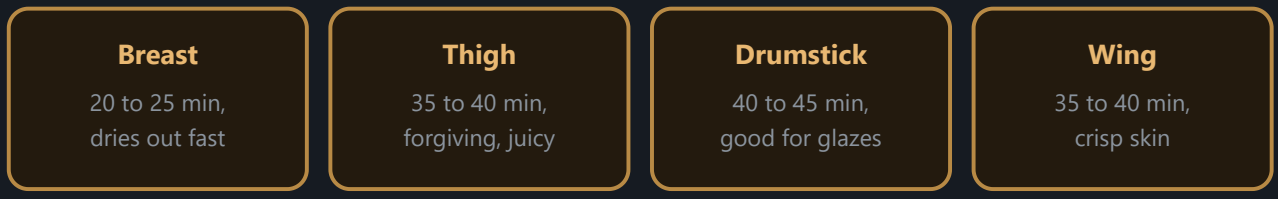


Figure 1. Breast, thigh, drumstick, wing: four cuts, four times at 200°C.

The method

- **Keep raw chicken cold and separate:** on the bottom shelf, in a covered dish, with its own board and tools.

- **Pat it dry** with kitchen paper before cooking; dry skin crisps, wet skin steams.
- **Season generously with salt,** ideally an hour or more ahead.
- **Cook hot and measure,** using a probe thermometer in the thickest part (75°C).
- **Rest for 5 to 10 minutes** on a warm plate under loose foil, then serve.

CUT	FAT	TIME AT 200°C (APPROXIMATE)	BEST FOR
Breast, skinless	Low	20 to 25 minutes	Slicing, salads, pan-frying
Thigh, bone-in	Medium	35 to 40 minutes	Roasting, casseroles, grilling
Drumstick	Medium	40 to 45 minutes	Glazes, barbecues, children
Wing	High	35 to 40 minutes	Crisp snacks, glazes

RAW CHICKEN, TEMPERATURE, HOT OVEN AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Hot oven and hot trays: ovens, trays and tins are hot enough to burn badly. Use dry oven gloves (a damp cloth conducts heat), pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Oven-baked thighs with lemon and herbs

55 minutes | 4 portions | roasting bone-in thighs until golden

The easiest way to cook chicken well. Bone-in, skin-on thighs on a tray with lemon and thyme, roasted hot until the skin is golden and the meat is cooked through. Check with a thermometer: 75°C in the thickest part, away from the bone.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
2 tbsp	olive oil
1	lemon, half sliced and half juiced
6	sprigs thyme
4	garlic cloves, left in their skins
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Pat the thighs dry, rub with the oil, salt, pepper and lemon juice, and arrange skin-side up on a tray with the lemon slices, thyme and garlic.
2. Roast for **35 to 40 minutes** until the skin is golden and crisp.
3. Check the thickest thigh reads 75°C, rest for 5 minutes, and serve with the pan juices.

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LEVEL 1 · GLAZE

Baked drumsticks with a honey-mustard glaze

1 hour | 4 portions | glazing late so it doesn't burn

Drumsticks are cheap and children like them. The honey in the glaze burns if it goes on too early, so bake the chicken first, then brush on the glaze for the last 15 minutes, turning once.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	chicken drumsticks
1 tbsp	olive oil
2 tbsp	runny honey
2 tbsp	wholegrain mustard
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1	garlic clove, grated
1	lemon, juice

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Toss the drumsticks in the oil and seasoning and roast on a lined tray for **25 minutes.**
2. Mix the honey, mustard, soy sauce, garlic and lemon juice. Brush it over the drumsticks, turn them, and roast for **15 to 20 minutes** more, brushing again halfway.
3. Check the thickest drumstick reads 75°C and the glaze is sticky and dark. Rest for 5 minutes.

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part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

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Allergens: contains mustard, soya and gluten (soy sauce).

LEVEL 2 · LEAN

Chicken breasts baked in a parcel

40 minutes | 4 portions | keeping lean breast moist

Breast is the easiest cut to dry out. A foil parcel with a little butter, lemon and herbs holds in the steam so the meat stays juicy. Open the parcel at the table and spoon the juices over. Check the thickest part reads 75°C.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	skinless chicken breasts (about 150 g each)
20 g	butter, divided into 4
1	lemon, sliced
4	sprigs thyme or tarragon
1 tbsp	olive oil
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Place each breast on a sheet of foil, rub with oil and salt, top with butter, lemon slices and herbs.
2. Fold the foil into sealed parcels, leaving room for steam, and bake on a tray for **25 to 30 minutes.**
3. Open one parcel (away from your face), check 75°C in the thickest part and no pink. Serve with the juices.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT STEAM AND TEMPERATURE

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> **Hot pot and hot steam:** a big pan of simmering stock or soup is heavy and scalding. Keep the handle turned in, use a ladle rather than pouring, lift the lid away from your face, and keep children and pets out of the kitchen while you move it.

LEVEL 3 · CRISP

A dry-brined chicken thigh

1 hour plus salting | 4 portions | salting ahead for crisp skin and seasoned meat

Salt the thighs and leave them uncovered in the fridge for at least 4 hours or overnight. The salt seasons the meat, and the open air dries the skin so that it crisps in the oven. It is the single best trick for chicken skin.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
2 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tsp	black pepper
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tbsp	olive oil

1. Pat the thighs dry, rub with the salt, pepper and paprika, and leave them on a rack over a plate, uncovered, in the fridge for **4 to 24 hours.**
2. Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan, gas 7). Rub with the oil and lay skin-side up on a tray.
3. Roast for **35 to 40 minutes** until the skin is deep golden and crisp and the thickest thigh reads 75°C. Rest for 5 minutes.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT OVEN AND TEMPERATURE

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Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Skin on or off

Moisture and crunch.

1. Roast one skin-on and one skinless thigh at 200°C for the same time.

Look for: The skin-on thigh is juicier and the skin is crisp; the skinless one is drier and paler.

EXPERIMENT

Bone-in or boneless

Time.

1. Roast a bone-in thigh next to a boneless one.

Look for: The boneless thigh cooks faster (about 20 to 25 minutes) but is drier; the bone-in one is juicier and takes longer.

EXPERIMENT

Thermometer or knife-cut

Doneness.

1. Cut into one thigh at 25 minutes and then check the next with a thermometer.

Look for: A thermometer tells you exactly; cutting shows pink juices that confuse, so use a probe for confidence.

EXPERIMENT

Salting an hour first

Seasoning.

1. Salt one thigh an hour ahead and another just before cooking.

Look for: The early-salted thigh is seasoned through and the skin is crisper; the late-salted one is only salty on the surface.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Baked thighs with lemon and herbs				
Glazed drumsticks				
Chicken breast in a parcel				
Dry-brined chicken thigh				
Skin on or off				
Bone-in or boneless				
Thermometer or knife-cut				
Salting an hour first				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Pink near the bone	Not cooked enough, or young chicken	Check 75°C; cook longer until juices are clear
Dry breast	Overcooked	Use a thermometer; take it off at 75°C

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Pale, soft skin	Wet skin or oven too cool	Pat dry, dry-brine, and use a hot oven
Burnt glaze	Glaze added too early	Brush on for the last 15 minutes
Chicken sticks to the tray	Tray unlined	Line with baking paper or oil the tray
Bland chicken	Not enough salt	Salt ahead of time and season well

RAW CHICKEN, LEFTOVERS AND ALLERGENS

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Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can store and handle raw chicken safely.
- ☐ I know the safe temperature, 75°C.
- ☐ I can use a probe thermometer.
- ☐ I can tell the cuts apart and cook each well.
- ☐ I can salt chicken ahead for better skin.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 2 is Roast Chicken: roasting, resting and carving a whole bird.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 2 · Roast Chicken

SKILL GOAL

Roast a whole chicken with crisp skin and moist meat, rest it and carve it neatly.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A roast chicken is the benchmark of home cooking. The method is simple: a **dry bird,** well **salted,** in a **hot oven,** then a proper **rest.** The rule of thumb is about **20 minutes per 500 g plus 20 minutes** at 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6), so a 1.6 kg bird takes about 1 hour 20 minutes. But time is a guide: the real test is 75°C in the thickest part of the thigh, with juices running clear.

Resting is part of the cooking. A bird rested for 20 minutes under foil carves cleanly and its juices stay in the meat. The roasting tin gives you the base for gravy (see Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 4 for other gravies), and the carcass goes into the stock pot for Cooking Skills: Soups and Stocks 1, chapter 1. Roast potatoes to go alongside are in Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 3.

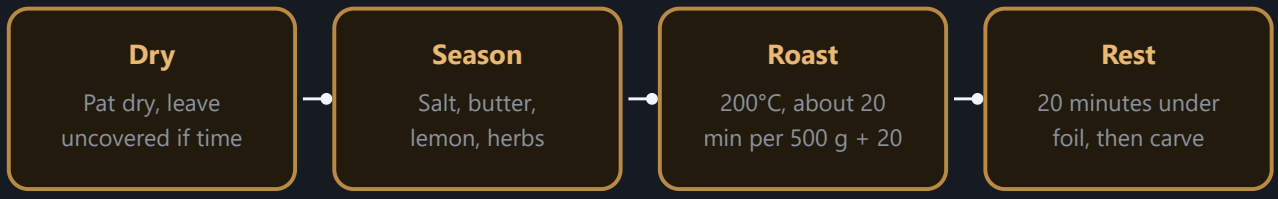


Figure 2. Dry, season, roast, rest: the stages of every roast chicken.

The method

- **Take the chicken out of the fridge** 30 minutes before roasting, and pat it very dry.
- **Season inside and out with plenty of salt,** and put lemon and herbs in the cavity.

- **Roast breast-side up** at 200°C, basting once or twice with the tin juices if you like.
- **Check the thigh with a thermometer:** 75°C, with clear juices when you pierce it.
- **Rest for 20 minutes** under foil on a warm board, then carve.

CHICKEN WEIGHT	TIME AT 200°C (APPROXIMATE)	SERVES	REST
1.2 kg	1 hour to 1 hour 5 minutes	3	15 minutes
1.6 kg	1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 20	4	20 minutes
2 kg	1 hour 30 minutes	5 to 6	20 minutes
2.4 kg	1 hour 45 minutes	6 to 8	25 minutes

RAW CHICKEN, HOT OVEN, TEMPERATURE AND HOT FAT

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Resting: resting lets the juices settle, but it is not a safety step: the chicken must already have reached its safe temperature. Rest it on a warm plate, loosely covered with foil, and keep it out of the 'danger zone' for no more than about 30 minutes before carving and serving.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A simple roast chicken

1 hour 45 minutes | 4 portions | roasting a whole bird with crisp skin

Nothing but salt, pepper, butter and a lemon. The simplest roast shows you what a good chicken tastes like. Pat the skin dry, salt it well, and let the oven do the work. Look for golden skin and clear juices from the thigh.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.6 kg	whole chicken
40 g	soft butter
1	lemon, halved
2 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tsp	black pepper

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Pat the chicken very dry. Rub the butter over the skin, season generously with salt and pepper, and put the lemon halves in the cavity.
2. Roast breast-side up in a tin for **1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes.**
3. Check the thickest part of the thigh reads 75°C and the juices run clear. Rest for **20 minutes** under foil, then carve.

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LEVEL 2 · TRAY

A lemon and herb roast with vegetables

1 hour 45 minutes | 4 portions | roasting a bird on a bed of vegetables

Put the vegetables under the bird and they roast in the chicken juices, which is hard to beat for flavour. Cut the vegetables large so they don't dry out, and add the potatoes after the first 30 minutes.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.6 kg	whole chicken
2	onions, quartered
3	carrots, cut into chunks
2	parsnips, cut into chunks
500 g	new potatoes, halved
1	lemon, halved
6	sprigs thyme
3 tbsp	olive oil
2 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Toss the onions, carrots and parsnips with half the oil and salt in a large tin. Pat the chicken dry, season, and put lemon and thyme in the cavity.
2. Sit the chicken on the vegetables and roast for 30 minutes, then add the potatoes and roast for **45 to 50 minutes** more.
3. Check the thigh reads 75°C. Rest the chicken for 20 minutes while the vegetables keep warm, then carve.

> **RAW CHICKEN, HOT OVEN AND HEAVY TIN**
>
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LEVEL 2 · BUTTER

Butter under the skin

1 hour 45 minutes | 4 portions | flavouring and moistening the breast

A herb butter slid between the skin and the breast keeps the breast moist and flavours the meat directly. Mash the butter with garlic and herbs, loosen the skin with your fingers, and push the butter underneath.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.6 kg	whole chicken
60 g	soft butter
2	garlic cloves, crushed
2 tbsp	chopped parsley
1 tbsp	chopped thyme
1	lemon, zest and halves
2 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Mash the butter with the garlic, herbs, lemon zest and half the salt. Gently loosen the skin over the breast with your fingers and push the butter underneath, smoothing from the outside.
2. Season the skin with the rest of the salt, put the lemon halves in the cavity, and roast at 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6) for **1 hour 15 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes.**
3. Check 75°C in the thigh, rest for 20 minutes, and spoon the buttery juices over the carved meat.

RAW CHICKEN, HANDS AND HOT OVEN

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LEVEL 3 · GRAVY

Roast chicken with gravy from the tin

2 hours | 4 portions | turning the tin juices into gravy and carving

After the chicken comes out to rest, the tin holds the best gravy base. Pour off most of the fat, put the tin on the hob, stir in flour and add stock, scraping up the brown bits. Carve while the gravy simmers.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.6 kg	roast chicken (as in recipe 1), resting
1 tbsp	fat from the roasting tin
1 tbsp	plain flour
400 ml	chicken stock, unsalted
1 tsp	Dijon mustard (optional)

1. Lift the chicken onto a board to rest. Pour off all but 1 tbsp of fat from the tin, leaving the brown juices. Put the tin on a medium heat.
2. Stir in the flour for 1 minute, then add the stock gradually, scraping up the browned bits, and simmer for **5 to 8 minutes** until thick. Strain, season and add the mustard.
3. Carve: remove the legs and cut them apart, take the breasts off whole and slice them across. Serve with the gravy.

HOT FAT, HOT TIN AND ALLERGENS

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Hot pot and hot steam: a big pan of simmering stock or soup is heavy and scalding. Keep the handle turned in, use a ladle rather than pouring, lift the lid away from your face, and keep children and pets out of the kitchen while you move it.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

> **Allergens:** contains gluten (flour) and celery; mustard if used.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Dry or wet skin

Crispness.

1. Roast two chicken pieces, one patted dry and one left damp.

Look for: The dry skin crisps and browns; the damp skin steams and stays pale and rubbery.

EXPERIMENT

High heat then low, or steady

Texture.

1. Roast one bird at 220°C for 20 minutes then 180°C, and another at a steady 200°C.

Look for: The hot start gives a crispier skin but risks drying the breast; the steady heat is easier and just as good.

EXPERIMENT

Resting 10 or 30 minutes

Juiciness.

1. Carve one bird after 10 minutes' rest and another after 30.

Look for: The 10-minute bird leaks more juice; the 30-minute one is juicier but cooler, so 20 minutes is about right.

EXPERIMENT

Trussed or not

Evenness.

1. Roast one bird with the legs tied and another untied.

Look for: The tied bird is neater and the breast cooks slower; the untied bird cooks the legs faster and more evenly.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Simple roast chicken				
Lemon and herb roast with vegetables				
Butter under the skin				
Roast chicken with gravy				
Dry or wet skin				
High heat then low, or steady				
Resting 10 or 30 minutes				
Trussed or not				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Pale, soft skin	Wet skin or cool oven	Pat dry, salt well and roast hot
Dry breast	Overcooked	Take out at 75°C in the thigh and rest
Pink near the bone	Not cooked	Return to the oven and check again

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Burnt vegetables	Cut too small	Cut large and add potatoes later
Lumpy gravy	Flour added to too much fat	Pour off the fat and whisk in the stock slowly
Chicken slides when carving	Not rested	Rest for 20 minutes and use a sharp knife

HOT OVEN, LEFTOVERS AND ALLERGENS

Hot oven and hot trays: ovens, trays and tins are hot enough to burn badly. Use dry oven gloves (a damp cloth conducts heat), pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can roast a whole chicken.
- ☐ I can tell when it is cooked.
- ☐ I can rest and carve a bird.
- ☐ I can make gravy from the roasting tin.
- ☐ I save the carcass for stock.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 3 is Pan-Frying Chicken: a hot pan, dry chicken and not moving it.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 3 · Pan-Frying Chicken

SKILL GOAL

Pan-fry chicken so the outside is golden and the inside cooked through but juicy, then make a pan sauce.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Pan-frying is quick and gives chicken a golden crust. The rules are the ones for any pan-frying: a **dry** surface, a **hot** pan, a little oil, and **don't move it** until it releases by itself. Thighs are forgiving; breasts are lean and need even thickness. A thick breast should be **halved horizontally** or **pounded** to about 1.5 cm so the outside doesn't burn before the middle cooks.

After frying, the browned bits stuck to the pan (the **fond**) become a pan sauce: add stock, lemon and a little butter, scrape and reduce for a few minutes. No wine is needed. For the safe temperature rule see the box: 75°C in the thickest part. Fried chicken proper (a crisp, coated, deep-fried bird) is in Chicken 2. For velouté and cream sauces see Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 3.

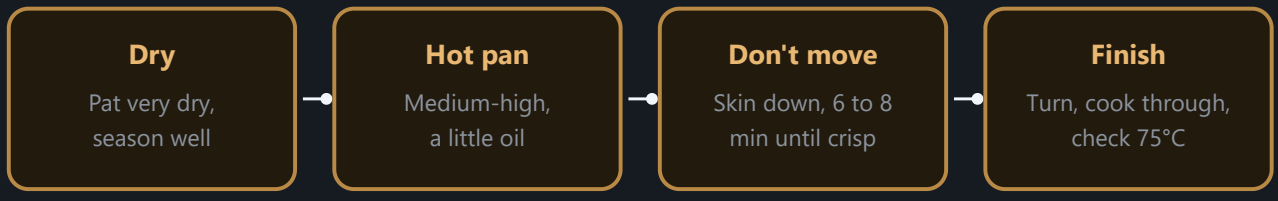


Figure 3. Dry, hot pan, don't move, finish: how to pan-fry chicken.

The method

- **Pat the chicken dry** and season both sides with salt and pepper.

- **Heat the pan until the oil shimmers,** then lay the chicken in away from you.
- **Leave it alone** for 5 to 8 minutes until golden and it releases from the pan.
- **Turn and finish,** in the oven if it is thick, until the thickest part reads 75°C.
- **Rest 5 minutes,** then make the pan sauce while it sits.

CUT	PREPARE	COOK (APPROXIMATE)	DONE WHEN
Thigh, skin on	Pat dry, season	7 min skin-down, 12 min turned or oven	75°C, skin crisp
Breast, pounded	Pound to 1.5 cm	5 to 6 minutes a side	75°C, no pink
Schnitzel	Pound, flour-egg-crumb	3 to 4 minutes a side	Golden, hot through
Strips for sauce	Cut into strips	5 to 7 minutes in total	No pink, juices clear

RAW CHICKEN, HOT OIL, TEMPERATURE AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Crispy-skin chicken thighs

35 minutes | 4 portions | a cold-to-hot pan for crisp skin

Boneless, skin-on thighs have the best skin-to-meat ratio for a pan. Start skin-side down in a cold pan with a drop of oil and bring it up to heat so the fat renders slowly and the skin crisps. Press down for the first minute so the skin stays flat.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	boneless, skin-on chicken thighs
1 tbsp	rapeseed oil
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tsp	black pepper
4	sprigs thyme
1	lemon, in wedges

1. Pat the thighs very dry and season. Lay them skin-side down in a cold, heavy pan with the oil, and place a plate or lid on top to keep them flat.
2. Cook over a medium heat for **10 to 12 minutes** without moving until the skin is deep golden and crisp.
3. Turn, add the thyme, and cook for **5 to 7 minutes** more. Check 75°C, rest for 5 minutes and serve with lemon.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT PAN AND TEMPERATURE

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C

> held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

LEVEL 2 · PAN SAUCE

A pan-fried breast with a lemon and stock pan sauce

30 minutes | 2 portions | pounding breast and building a pan sauce

Pound the breasts to an even 1.5 cm so they cook in minutes. Fry them, rest them, then in the same pan boil stock and lemon with a spoon of butter to make a glossy sauce. No wine is used.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	skinless chicken breasts (about 150 g each)
2 tbsp	plain flour, seasoned
1 tbsp	rapeseed oil
200 ml	chicken stock, unsalted
1	lemon, juice
20 g	cold butter, cubed
1 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Pound the breasts between baking paper to 1.5 cm. Dust lightly with flour. Fry in the hot oil for **5 to 6 minutes a side** until golden. Check 75°C, then lift onto a plate and rest.
2. Add the stock and lemon juice to the pan and boil hard for **3 to 4 minutes** to reduce by half, scraping up the brown bits.
3. Off the heat, swirl in the cold butter and parsley, season, and spoon over the chicken.

RAW CHICKEN, POUNDING AND HOT PAN

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Pounding chicken: pounding breast to an even thickness helps it cook quickly, but it splashes. Put the chicken between two sheets of baking paper or inside a freezer bag, use a rolling pin or the flat of a pan, and wash the pin, board and your hands in hot soapy water straight

afterwards.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

LEVEL 2 · CRUMB

Chicken schnitzel

30 minutes | 2 portions | pounding, coating and shallow-frying

A thin pounded breast in flour, egg and crumbs, shallow-fried until golden. The thinner it is, the quicker it cooks and the crisper the crumb. Keep the oil at medium heat so the crumbs brown before the chicken dries out.

INGREDIENTS (2 PORTIONS)

2	skinless chicken breasts (about 150 g each)
3 tbsp	plain flour, seasoned
1	egg, beaten
60 g	panko or fresh breadcrumbs
4 tbsp	rapeseed oil
1	lemon, in wedges

1. Halve the breasts horizontally and pound each piece to 1 cm. Coat in flour, then egg, then crumbs, pressing on gently.
2. Heat the oil to a depth of 5 mm over a medium heat until a crumb sizzles gently.
3. Fry for **3 to 4 minutes a side** until golden and cooked through (75°C). Drain on kitchen paper and serve with lemon.

RAW CHICKEN, POUNDING, HOT OIL AND EGG

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Pounding chicken: pounding breast to an even thickness helps it cook quickly, but it splashes. Put the chicken between two sheets of baking paper or inside a freezer bag, use a rolling pin or the flat of a pan, and wash the pin, board and your hands in hot soapy water straight afterwards.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use

dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Allergens: contains egg and gluten.

LEVEL 3 · SAUCE

Chicken in a creamy mushroom sauce

40 minutes | 4 portions | browning chicken and mushrooms and finishing in a cream sauce

Strips of breast, quickly browned and set aside, then mushrooms browned hard, stock added, and the chicken returned to finish gently in cream and mustard. Don't boil the sauce once the cream is in. Serve with rice or mash.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	skinless chicken breast, cut into strips
2 tbsp	rapeseed oil
300 g	chestnut mushrooms, sliced
1	onion, finely chopped
2	garlic cloves, grated
200 ml	chicken stock, unsalted
150 ml	double cream
1 tsp	wholegrain mustard
2 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Brown the chicken strips in 1 tbsp oil for **4 minutes,** lift out. Brown the mushrooms in the remaining oil for 6 minutes, add the onion and garlic for 5 minutes.
2. Add the stock and boil to reduce by a third. Stir in the cream and mustard and simmer gently for 3 minutes.
3. Return the chicken and juices, simmer for **3 to 4 minutes** until cooked through (75°C), and stir in the parsley.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT PAN, CREAM AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Hot milk and cream: milk and cream boil over in seconds and burn worse than water. Keep the heat low, stay at the pan, and add dairy at the end. Never boil a soup once it has cream, or it may split.

Allergens: contains milk, mustard and celery.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Pounded or whole breast

Evenness.

1. Pan-fry one pounded breast and one whole breast for the same time.

Look for: The pounded breast cooks evenly in 10 minutes; the whole breast is overcooked at the thin end and pink at the thick end.

EXPERIMENT

Cold or hot pan

Skin crispness.

1. Start one thigh in a cold pan and one in a hot pan.

Look for: The cold-start thigh renders its fat slowly and gets crispier skin; the hot-start one browns fast but the skin can stay chewy.

EXPERIMENT

Skin down in a cold pan

Crispness.

1. Cook two thighs skin-down, one pressed flat with a plate and one left free.

Look for: The pressed thigh has an even, flat, crisp skin; the free one curls and has uneven patches.

EXPERIMENT

Sauce reduced or thickened

Texture.

1. Make one pan sauce reduced by half and another thickened with a teaspoon of cornflour.

Look for: The reduced sauce is intense and glossy; the cornflour one is thicker but less concentrated.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Crispy-skin thighs				
Pan-fried breast with a pan sauce				
Chicken schnitzel				
Chicken in a creamy mushroom sauce				
Pounded or whole breast				
Cold or hot pan				
Skin down in a cold pan				
Sauce reduced or thickened				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Chicken sticks to the pan	Pan not hot or you moved it too soon	Leave it until it releases on its own
Pale, rubbery skin	Wet skin or too high heat	Pat dry and use a cold start for thighs
Dry breast	Overcooked or too thick	Pound it and check 75°C
Raw in the middle	Too thick	Halve horizontally or finish in the oven
Burnt crumbs	Oil too hot	Use a medium heat
Split cream sauce	Boiled after the cream	Simmer gently, never boil

HOT OIL, RAW CHICKEN AND LEFTOVERS

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can pan-fry chicken without it sticking.
- ☐ I can pound a breast to an even thickness.
- ☐ I can make a pan sauce.
- ☐ I can coat and shallow-fry a schnitzel.
- ☐ I check chicken is cooked through.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 4 is Grilling and Barbecue: high heat, marinades and the safe centre.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 4 · Grilling and Barbecue

SKILL GOAL

Cook chicken over high heat with marinades so the outside is charred and the inside is cooked through.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Grilling (under a grill, on a ridged pan or on a barbecue) is fast, high heat. Chicken is a tricky meat for it because the outside burns before the inside is cooked. The trick is a **two-zone fire:** a hot side to sear and a cooler side to finish. Sear first, then move to the cooler side with the lid down, turning once or twice, until the thickest part reads 75°C. Under a grill, use a lower shelf for thick pieces.

Marinades add flavour and a little tenderness: **acid** (lemon, yogurt), **oil**, **salt** and **herbs or spices.** A yogurt marinade is gentle; a long acid soak makes the surface mushy. Thin, even pieces cook best. Cooking Skills: Sauces 2, chapter 7 covers marinades, rubs and glazes in detail, and Cooking Skills: Sauces 2, chapter 5 covers salsas to serve alongside.

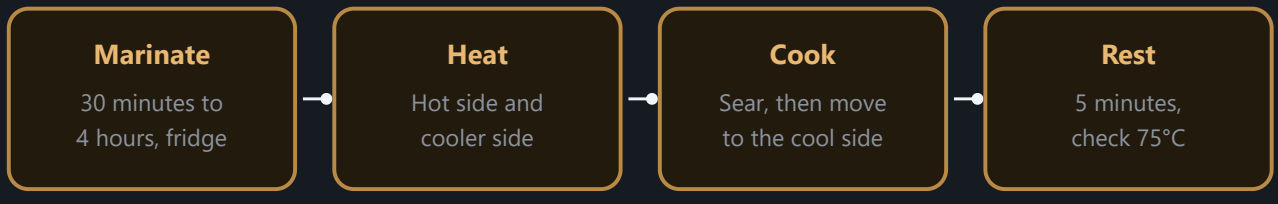


Figure 4. Marinate, set up two zones, sear then move, and rest.

The method

- **Marinate in the fridge** for 30 minutes to 4 hours in a covered dish; not longer with acid.

- **Pat off wet marinade,** so the chicken sears instead of steaming.
- **Sear over high heat,** then move to the cooler side or lower shelf to cook through.
- **Turn only once or twice,** and brush on sugary glazes in the last few minutes.
- **Check 75°C,** then rest for 5 minutes before serving.

DISH	CUT	MARINADE	COOK (APPROXIMATE)
Grilled thighs	Boneless thigh	Lemon, garlic, herbs	12 to 15 minutes
Yogurt skewers	Breast cubes	Yogurt, lemon, garlic	10 to 12 minutes
Barbecue drumsticks	Drumstick	Barbecue-style sauce	Oven 30 + grill 10 minutes
Chicken burgers	Minced thigh	Herbs and spring onion	5 to 6 minutes a side

RAW CHICKEN, HOT GRILL, BARBECUE AND MARINADE

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot grill: a grill is extremely hot and food under it burns in a minute. Stay at the cooker, use oven gloves and keep the grill pan clear of loose items. Cheese bubbles and drips, so use a tray.

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and never leave it unattended. Always check chicken is cooked through, since it can be burnt outside and raw inside.

Marinades and raw chicken: never reuse a marinade that has touched raw chicken as a sauce unless you boil it hard for at least a few minutes. Marinate in the fridge, not on the worktop, in a covered dish, and discard the marinade or boil it before serving.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Lemon and herb grilled thighs

30 minutes plus marinating | 4 portions | grilling boneless thighs

The easiest chicken for the grill, because thigh stays juicy even when you are not watching. A short lemon, garlic and herb marinade does the rest. Grill skin-side up first to render the fat, then flip.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	boneless chicken thighs, skin on or off
3 tbsp	olive oil
1	lemon, zest and juice
3	garlic cloves, grated
2 tbsp	chopped thyme and parsley
1 tsp	flaked sea salt

1. Mix the oil, lemon zest and juice, garlic, herbs, salt and pepper. Coat the thighs, cover and marinate in the fridge for **30 minutes to 2 hours.**
2. Heat the grill (or barbecue) to high. Lift the thighs from the marinade, shake off the excess, and cook for **6 to 7 minutes** a side, moving to a cooler spot if they char.
3. Check 75°C in the thickest part, rest for 5 minutes and serve with lemon.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT GRILL AND MARINADE

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot grill: a grill is extremely hot and food under it burns in a minute. Stay at the cooker, use oven gloves and keep the grill pan clear of loose items. Cheese bubbles and drips, so use a tray.

Marinades and raw chicken: never reuse a marinade that has touched raw chicken as a sauce unless you boil it hard for at least a few minutes. Marinate in the fridge, not on the worktop, in a covered dish, and discard the marinade or boil it before serving.

> **Is it cooked? Use a thermometer:** chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

LEVEL 2 · SKEWERS

Yogurt and lemon skewers

30 minutes plus marinating | 4 portions | skewering and cooking cubes evenly

Cubes of breast (or thigh) marinated in yogurt, lemon and garlic, threaded on skewers and grilled. The yogurt makes them tender and helps them brown. Cut the pieces the same size so they cook together, and leave space between them on the skewer.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

600 g	chicken breast or thigh, cut into 3 cm cubes
150 g	plain Greek yogurt
1	lemon, juice
2	garlic cloves, grated
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
8	skewers (metal, or wooden soaked in water for 30 minutes)

1. Mix the yogurt, lemon juice, garlic, paprika and salt, coat the chicken, cover and marinate in the fridge for **1 to 4 hours.**
2. Thread the chicken on skewers, leaving small gaps. Heat the grill to high.
3. Grill for **10 to 12 minutes,** turning every 3 minutes, until charred in places. Check a cube is 75°C and white inside.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT GRILL AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot grill: a grill is extremely hot and food under it burns in a minute. Stay at the cooker, use oven gloves and keep the grill pan clear of loose items. Cheese bubbles and drips, so use a tray.

Marinades and raw chicken: never reuse a marinade that has touched raw chicken as a sauce

unless you boil it hard for at least a few minutes. Marinate in the fridge, not on the worktop, in a covered dish, and discard the marinade or boil it before serving.

Allergens: contains milk.

LEVEL 2 · OVEN THEN GRILL

Barbecue-style drumsticks

1 hour | 4 portions | cooking through first, then glazing

Sticky drumsticks are best cooked in the oven first, so they are safe and tender, and finished on the grill or barbecue with a sweet, smoky sauce for colour. This avoids the classic problem of burnt outsides and raw insides.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	chicken drumsticks
4 tbsp	ketchup
1 tbsp	tomato paste
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	dark brown sugar
1 tbsp	cider vinegar
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1	garlic clove, grated

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6). Roast the drumsticks on a lined tray for **30 minutes.** Meanwhile mix the sauce ingredients in a small pan and simmer for 5 minutes.
2. Brush the drumsticks with the sauce and finish under a hot grill (or on the barbecue) for **8 to 10 minutes,** turning and brushing, until sticky and charred in spots.
3. Check the thickest drumstick reads 75°C. Rest for 5 minutes.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT OVEN, GRILL AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot oven and hot trays: ovens, trays and tins are hot enough to burn badly. Use dry oven gloves (a damp cloth conducts heat), pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things

on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Hot grill: a grill is extremely hot and food under it burns in a minute. Stay at the cooker, use oven gloves and keep the grill pan clear of loose items. Cheese bubbles and drips, so use a tray.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

LEVEL 3 · MINCE

Chicken burgers

35 minutes plus chilling | 4 portions | cooking minced chicken safely

Chicken burgers are lean and dry out easily, so use thigh mince, add moisture (grated courgette or onion) and don't overwork it. Because mince spoils faster, they must be cooked right through to 75°C. Serve in a bun with salsa or yogurt sauce.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	minced chicken thigh
1	small onion, grated
4	spring onions, finely sliced
40 g	fresh breadcrumbs
1 tbsp	chopped parsley
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1 tbsp	olive oil
4	burger buns

1. Mix the mince, onion, spring onions, breadcrumbs, parsley, paprika and salt gently with your hands. Shape into 4 patties 2 cm thick and chill for **30 minutes.**
2. Brush with oil and grill (or fry) over a medium-high heat for **5 to 6 minutes a side** until no pink remains and the middle reads 75°C.
3. Rest for 3 minutes and serve in buns.

MINCED CHICKEN, HOT GRILL AND ALLERGENS

Minced chicken must be cooked through: burgers and anything made from mince must be cooked right through to 75°C, with no pink inside. Mince spoils faster than whole pieces, so keep it very cold, use it the day you buy it, and wash your hands, board and tools in hot soapy water afterwards.

Hot grill: a grill is extremely hot and food under it burns in a minute. Stay at the cooker, use oven gloves and keep the grill pan clear of loose items. Cheese bubbles and drips, so use a tray.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Allergens: contains gluten (breadcrumbs and buns).

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Marinade 30 minutes or 4 hours

Flavour and texture.

1. Marinate two thighs in lemon and garlic, one for 30 minutes and one for 4 hours.

Look for: The longer marinade tastes stronger but the surface of lean meat can turn soft; 30 minutes to 2 hours is plenty.

EXPERIMENT

Skewers soaked or not

Burning.

1. Grill a wooden skewer soaked in water and one dry.

Look for: The dry skewer chars at the ends; the soaked one lasts longer, though metal skewers avoid the problem.

EXPERIMENT

Direct or indirect heat

Charring.

1. Cook one thigh over direct heat all the way and another seared then finished indirectly.

Look for: Direct heat chars the outside before the middle is done; searing then finishing indirectly gives a golden and fully cooked piece.

EXPERIMENT

Thick or thin pieces

Time.

1. Grill a thick breast and a pounded thin one.

Look for: The thin piece cooks in 8 minutes and chars evenly; the thick breast is burnt before the middle is cooked.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Lemon and herb grilled thighs				
Yogurt and lemon skewers				
Barbecue-style drumsticks				
Chicken burgers				
Marinade 30 minutes or 4 hours				
Skewers soaked or not				
Direct or indirect heat				
Thick or thin pieces				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Burnt outside, raw inside	Heat too high or piece too thick	Use two zones; flatten thick pieces; finish in the oven
Dry chicken	Overcooked or lean cut	Use thighs, or take breast off at 75°C
Flare-ups	Dripping marinade or fat	Pat off the marinade; keep a cool zone
Sticks to the grate	Not oiled, or turned too early	Oil the chicken, and leave it until it releases
Sauce burns	Sugary glaze too early	Brush it on in the last 5 minutes
Burgers fall apart	Mince warm or overworked	Chill and handle lightly

HOT GRILL, BARBECUE AND LEFTOVERS

Hot grill: a grill is extremely hot and food under it burns in a minute. Stay at the cooker, use oven gloves and keep the grill pan clear of loose items. Cheese bubbles and drips, so use a tray.

Barbecue safety: use a barbecue outdoors only, never in a tent, garage or indoors, because it gives off carbon monoxide, which you cannot see or smell. Never use petrol or extra lighter fluid on lit coals, keep children and pets away, and never leave it unattended. Always check chicken is cooked through, since it can be burnt outside and raw inside.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can set up a hot and a cool zone.
- ☐ I can marinate chicken safely.
- ☐ I can cook skewers evenly.
- ☐ I can finish drumsticks without burning them.
- ☐ I can cook minced chicken right through.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 5 is Poaching and Steaming: gentle cooking in liquid for moist, tender meat.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 5 · Poaching and Steaming

SKILL GOAL

Cook chicken gently in liquid so it stays moist, tender and ready to shred or slice.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Poaching is the gentlest way to cook chicken and the most forgiving. The chicken goes into **cold** liquid with aromatics (onion, bay, peppercorns, ginger), comes to a **bare simmer** with just a few bubbles, and cooks quietly for 15 to 20 minutes. A hard boil toughens the meat and makes it stringy. The resulting chicken is tender enough to shred for salads and sandwiches, and the cooking liquid is a free light stock.

Steaming is the other moist method, cooking over simmering water, so nothing is lost to the liquid. It suits thin pieces and a ginger and spring onion flavouring. Poached chicken needs a sharp or rich accompaniment to shine: a sesame dressing, a tarragon cream sauce (see Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 3 for velouté sauces), or a spoon of the broth. For soups with poached chicken see Cooking Skills: Soups and Stocks 1, chapter 3.

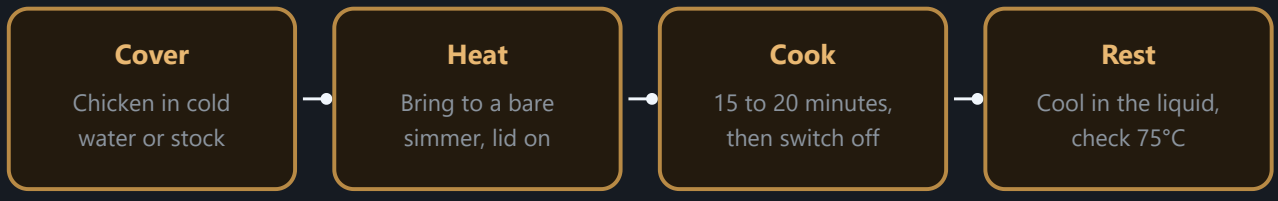


Figure 5. Cover, heat, cook, rest: the four steps of poaching.

The method

- **Start in cold liquid** with aromatics and a little salt; the meat cooks evenly from cold.

- **Bring to a bare simmer,** cover, then lower the heat to the gentlest possible.
- **Cook 15 to 20 minutes** for breasts, then check 75°C in the thickest part.
- **Let it cool in the liquid** for 10 to 15 minutes to stay juicy.
- **Shred or slice against the grain,** and use the broth for soup or sauce.

METHOD	BEST FOR	TIME (APPROXIMATE)	RESULT
Poached breast	Salads, sandwiches	15 to 20 minutes	Moist, tender, easy to shred
Poached in cream sauce	Dinners	20 minutes	Silky, rich
Steamed, thin pieces	Light meals	12 to 15 minutes	Delicate, clean-tasting
Poached whole thighs	Shredding	25 to 30 minutes	Very tender

RAW CHICKEN, HOT LIQUID, STEAM AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Poaching is gentle, not raw: poaching uses water at a bare simmer (about 80 to 90°C), not a boil. The chicken must still reach 75°C in the thickest part, so check with a thermometer, not just the clock. Keep the lid on, never leave a pan of hot liquid unattended, and lift the chicken out with a slotted spoon, not by pouring.

Hot steam: steam scalds worse than boiling water. Lift lids away from your face, use oven gloves, open foil and steamer lids slowly, and keep children well back. A bamboo steamer over a pan is hot all round.

Sesame and peanuts: sesame is one of the 14 major allergens, and peanuts are a common one. Check labels on tahini, sesame oil and peanut butter, tell guests what is in a dish, and use clean spoons and boards.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Poached chicken breast

35 minutes | 4 portions | poaching gently and testing with a probe

The foundation. Poach in lightly salted water with aromatics, and the chicken is tender and moist, with a bonus pot of broth. Slice it for a salad, shred it for sandwiches, or serve warm with a sauce. Keep the heat low: the water should barely move.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	skinless chicken breasts (about 150 g each)
1 litres	cold water or low-salt chicken stock
1	onion, halved
2	bay leaves
6	peppercorns
1 tsp	flaked sea salt
1	carrot, halved

1. Put the chicken, water, onion, bay, peppercorns, salt and carrot in a pan. Bring slowly to a bare simmer, skimming any foam.
2. Cover and cook over the lowest heat for **15 to 20 minutes.** Check the thickest part reads 75°C and is white all through.
3. Switch off and leave in the liquid for 10 minutes, then lift out and slice or shred. Keep the broth for soup.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT LIQUID AND TEMPERATURE

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Poaching is gentle, not raw: poaching uses water at a bare simmer (about 80 to 90°C), not a boil. The chicken must still reach 75°C in the thickest part, so check with a thermometer, not just the clock. Keep the lid on, never leave a pan of hot liquid unattended, and lift the chicken out

with a slotted spoon, not by pouring.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Hot pot and hot steam: a big pan of simmering stock or soup is heavy and scalding. Keep the handle turned in, use a ladle rather than pouring, lift the lid away from your face, and keep children and pets out of the kitchen while you move it.

LEVEL 2 · SALAD

A shredded sesame chicken salad

25 minutes | 4 portions | dressing shredded poached chicken

Cold poached chicken, shredded, with crunchy cucumber, carrot and spring onion, in a nutty sesame and peanut dressing. Shred the chicken while it is still slightly warm so it takes up the dressing.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

3	poached chicken breasts (recipe 1), shredded
1	cucumber, cut into thin sticks
2	carrots, grated
4	spring onions, sliced
2 tbsp	peanut butter or tahini
2 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tbsp	rice vinegar
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil
1 tsp	honey
2 tbsp	warm water
1 tbsp	sesame seeds, toasted

1. Whisk the peanut butter, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, honey and warm water to a pourable dressing.
2. Toss the shredded chicken with the dressing, then fold in the cucumber, carrot and spring onions.
3. Scatter with the sesame seeds and serve cold or at room temperature.

> **COOKED CHICKEN, SESAME AND ALLERGENS**
>
> **Leftover chicken:** cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Sesame and peanuts: sesame is one of the 14 major allergens, and peanuts are a common one. Check labels on tahini, sesame oil and peanut butter, tell guests what is in a dish, and use clean spoons and boards.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Allergens: contains peanuts or sesame, soya, gluten and sometimes honey.

LEVEL 2 · CREAM

Poached chicken in a tarragon cream sauce

40 minutes | 4 portions | turning the poaching liquid into a sauce

A French-style dinner. Poach the chicken in stock with aromatics, then use a ladle of that stock to make a silky, tarragon-flavoured sauce. It is a velouté in miniature (Cooking Skills: Sauces 1, chapter 3). Serve with rice or new potatoes.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	skinless chicken breasts
500 ml	low-salt chicken stock
1	onion, halved
30 g	butter
30 g	plain flour
100 ml	double cream
2 tbsp	chopped fresh tarragon
1	lemon, juice

1. Poach the chicken in the stock with the onion for **15 to 20 minutes** at a bare simmer until 75°C. Lift out and keep warm. Strain and keep 350 ml of stock.
2. Melt the butter, stir in the flour for 1 minute, then add the hot stock gradually, whisking, and simmer for 5 minutes until thick. Stir in the cream and tarragon.
3. Season with lemon juice and salt, slice the chicken and spoon the sauce over.

HOT LIQUID, RAW CHICKEN, CREAM AND ALLERGENS

Poaching is gentle, not raw: poaching uses water at a bare simmer (about 80 to 90°C), not a boil. The chicken must still reach 75°C in the thickest part, so check with a thermometer, not just the clock. Keep the lid on, never leave a pan of hot liquid unattended, and lift the chicken out with a slotted spoon, not by pouring.

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw

chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot milk and cream: milk and cream boil over in seconds and burn worse than water. Keep the heat low, stay at the pan, and add dairy at the end. Never boil a soup once it has cream, or it may split.

Allergens: contains milk, gluten and celery.

LEVEL 3 · STEAM

Ginger and spring onion steamed chicken

35 minutes | 4 portions | steaming chicken and finishing with hot oil

Thin pieces of chicken steamed with ginger until silky, then topped with fresh ginger and spring onion, and a spoonful of hot oil poured over to release the aroma. A Cantonese classic that is simple and clean. Serve with rice.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

4	boneless chicken thighs, skin on, sliced into 3 cm strips
2 tbsp	grated fresh ginger
1 tbsp	soy sauce
1 tsp	cornflour
4	spring onions, finely shredded
2 tbsp	rapeseed oil
1 tsp	toasted sesame oil

1. Mix the chicken with half the ginger, the soy sauce and cornflour. Arrange in a single layer on a heatproof plate.
2. Steam over simmering water for **12 to 15 minutes** until no pink remains and the chicken is 75°C.
3. Scatter with the remaining ginger and spring onions. Heat the oils until shimmering and pour over the top. Serve at once.

STEAM, HOT OIL AND RAW CHICKEN

Hot steam: steam scalds worse than boiling water. Lift lids away from your face, use oven gloves, open foil and steamer lids slowly, and keep children well back. A bamboo steamer over a pan is hot all round.

Hot oil and spices: oil poured over ginger and spring onion spits and sizzles. Heat it until it shimmers, not smokes, pour it slowly away from you onto the aromatics, and keep your face back.

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never

wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Water or stock

Flavour.

1. Poach one breast in water and another in stock, both with the same aromatics.

Look for: Stock gives a savoury breast and a stronger broth; water is cleaner and leaves the chicken tasting purely of chicken.

EXPERIMENT

Simmering or boiling

Texture.

1. Cook two breasts, one at a bare simmer and one at a hard boil, for the same time.

Look for: The boiled breast is tough and stringy; the gently simmered one is tender and moist.

EXPERIMENT

Cooling in the liquid

Juiciness.

1. Lift one breast out immediately and let another cool in the liquid for 15 minutes.

Look for: The cooled-in-liquid breast stays moist; the lifted-out one dries at the surface.

EXPERIMENT

Steamed or poached

Taste.

1. Cook strips of thigh by steaming and by poaching, then compare.

Look for: Steamed chicken keeps more flavour and a silkier texture; poached chicken is softer and gives a broth.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Poached chicken breast				
Shredded sesame chicken salad				
Chicken in a tarragon cream sauce				
Ginger and spring onion steamed chicken				
Water or stock				
Simmering or boiling				
Cooling in the liquid				
Steamed or poached				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Tough, stringy chicken	Boiled	Keep to a bare simmer and take it off at 75°C
Bland chicken	Plain water, no aromatics	Add onion, bay, peppercorns and salt, or use stock
Raw in the middle	Pieces too thick	Slice thick breasts or check with a probe
Rubbery thin pieces	Steamed too long	Check at 12 minutes
Lumpy cream sauce	Cold stock into hot roux	Add hot stock slowly and whisk
Dry shredded chicken	Overcooked or cooled out of the liquid	Cool it in the liquid

HOT LIQUID, LEFTOVERS AND ALLERGENS

Poaching is gentle, not raw: poaching uses water at a bare simmer (about 80 to 90°C), not a boil. The chicken must still reach 75°C in the thickest part, so check with a thermometer, not just the clock. Keep the lid on, never leave a pan of hot liquid unattended, and lift the chicken out with a slotted spoon, not by pouring.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

☐ I can poach chicken at a bare simmer.

☐ I can check poached chicken is 75°C.

☐ I can shred chicken for a salad.

☐ I can make a sauce from poaching liquid.

☐ I can steam chicken safely.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 6 is Stews and Casseroles: browning, simmering and thickening.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 6 · Stews and Casseroles

SKILL GOAL

Brown, simmer and thicken chicken in a pot so the sauce is rich and the meat falls off the bone.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

Chicken thighs and drumsticks are made for stewing: the bone and skin add flavour and the dark meat stays juicy through long cooking. The method follows Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 1, chapter 5 (braising and stews) but is much quicker: **brown** the chicken well in batches, **sweat** the vegetables in the same pot, add **stock and herbs,** return the chicken, and **simmer** gently for 30 to 45 minutes until it is tender and almost falling off the bone.

Skin gets soft in a stew, so many cooks remove it after browning (the fat has done its work), or leave it on for richness and lift it off before serving. Breasts dry out in a stew, so use thighs. Thicken by reducing, by a spoonful of flour stirred in with the vegetables, or by finishing with cream. For a slow cooker version see Cooking Skills: Beef and Steak 2, chapter 3. No wine or cider is used here; stock, tomato and mustard supply the depth.

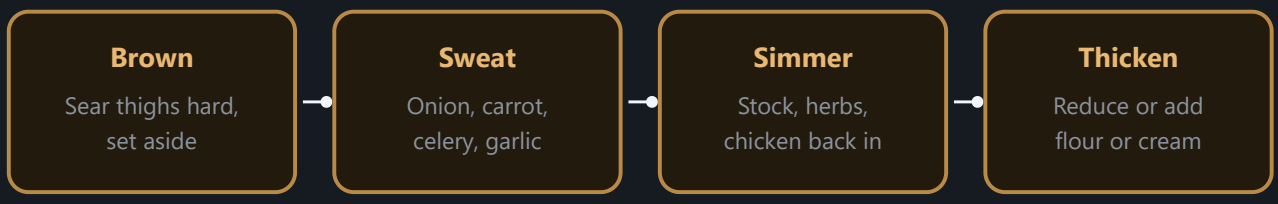


Figure 6. Brown, sweat, simmer and thicken: the layers of a chicken casserole.

The method

- **Brown the chicken hard** in batches, skin-side down first, and set it aside.
- **Sweat the vegetables** in the chicken fat, scraping up the brown bits.
- **Add stock, herbs and any tomato,** return the chicken and bring to a bare simmer.
- **Simmer, lid ajar,** for 30 to 45 minutes until tender, with 75°C well exceeded.
- **Thicken and season at the end,** skimming off the surface fat.

DISH	CUT	SAUCE	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Chicken and vegetable casserole	Bone-in thighs	Stock and herbs	1 hour
Chasseur-style stew	Bone-in thighs	Tomato and mushroom	1 hour
Chicken and leek	Boneless thighs	Cream and mustard	45 minutes
Pulled chicken	Thighs	Sticky tomato	1 hour 15 minutes

RAW CHICKEN, HOT CASSEROLE, BONES AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot casserole: a covered dish or pot of casserole is heavy, with scalding steam under the lid. Use dry oven gloves, lift the lid away from you, rest the dish on a heatproof surface, and use a ladle to serve.

Bones in stock: strain stock through a sieve before it goes near children or anyone eating from it, because small bones come loose in long simmering. Cooked chicken bones splinter, so never give them to dogs.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A one-pot chicken and vegetable casserole

1 hour 10 minutes | 4 portions | browning and simmering in one pot

The classic family casserole. Brown bone-in thighs, soften carrots, onion and celery, then simmer everything with potatoes and thyme. Skim the fat at the end and the sauce is light and savoury. Serve straight from the pot.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	bone-in chicken thighs
2 tbsp	rapeseed oil
2	onions, sliced
3	carrots, chunked
2	celery sticks, sliced
2	garlic cloves, sliced
1 tbsp	plain flour
700 ml	chicken stock, unsalted
500 g	baby new potatoes, halved
4	sprigs thyme
2	bay leaves

1. Brown the thighs in the oil in two batches for **5 minutes a side** until deep golden. Set aside. Soften the onions, carrots and celery in the same pot for 8 minutes, add the garlic and flour for 1 minute.
2. Add the stock, thyme and bay, return the chicken, and simmer, lid ajar, for **20 minutes.** Add the potatoes and simmer for **25 to 30 minutes** more until everything is tender.
3. Skim the fat, check the chicken is well past 75°C and falling from the bone, and season.

> **RAW CHICKEN, HOT CASSEROLE AND BONES**
>
> **Raw chicken: the safety rules:** raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot

soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot casserole: a covered dish or pot of casserole is heavy, with scalding steam under the lid. Use dry oven gloves, lift the lid away from you, rest the dish on a heatproof surface, and use a ladle to serve.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Bones in stock: strain stock through a sieve before it goes near children or anyone eating from it, because small bones come loose in long simmering. Cooked chicken bones splinter, so never give them to dogs.

LEVEL 2 · TOMATO

A chicken chasseur-style stew (no wine)

1 hour 10 minutes | 4 portions | a mushroom and tomato sauce built without wine

The French hunter's chicken, usually made with white wine. Here the acidity comes from tomatoes and a splash of cider vinegar at the end. Brown the mushrooms hard for depth, and serve with mash or rice.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	bone-in chicken thighs
2 tbsp	rapeseed oil
250 g	chestnut mushrooms, quartered
1	onion, finely chopped
3	garlic cloves, sliced
2 tbsp	tomato paste
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
300 ml	chicken stock, unsalted
2	sprigs thyme
1 tsp	cider vinegar
2 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Brown the thighs in the oil for 5 minutes a side and set aside. Brown the mushrooms in the same pot for 6 minutes, add the onion, garlic and tomato paste for 3 minutes.
2. Add the tomatoes, stock and thyme, return the chicken and simmer, lid ajar, for **40 to 45 minutes** until very tender and the sauce is thick.
3. Stir in the vinegar and parsley, check the chicken is cooked through and season.

> **RAW CHICKEN, HOT CASSEROLE AND BONES**
>
> **Raw chicken: the safety rules:** raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw

chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot casserole: a covered dish or pot of casserole is heavy, with scalding steam under the lid. Use dry oven gloves, lift the lid away from you, rest the dish on a heatproof surface, and use a ladle to serve.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Bones in stock: strain stock through a sieve before it goes near children or anyone eating from it, because small bones come loose in long simmering. Cooked chicken bones splinter, so never give them to dogs.

LEVEL 2 · CREAM

Chicken and leek in a creamy sauce

50 minutes | 4 portions | finishing a stew with cream and mustard

Boneless thighs simmered with leeks in stock, finished with cream and a spoonful of wholegrain mustard. It is a one-pan dinner that suits rice or mash. Add the cream at the end and never let it boil.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	boneless chicken thighs, halved
2 tbsp	rapeseed oil
3	leeks, sliced
2	garlic cloves, sliced
1 tbsp	plain flour
400 ml	chicken stock, unsalted
100 ml	double cream
1 tbsp	wholegrain mustard
2 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Brown the chicken in the oil for **4 minutes a side** and set aside. Soften the leeks and garlic in the same pot for 6 minutes, stir in the flour.
2. Add the stock, return the chicken and simmer gently for **20 minutes** until cooked through (75°C or higher) and the sauce has thickened.
3. Stir in the cream and mustard, warm gently without boiling, and add the parsley.

RAW CHICKEN, HOT POT, CREAM AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot casserole: a covered dish or pot of casserole is heavy, with scalding steam under the lid.

Use dry oven gloves, lift the lid away from you, rest the dish on a heatproof surface, and use a ladle to serve.

Hot milk and cream: milk and cream boil over in seconds and burn worse than water. Keep the heat low, stay at the pan, and add dairy at the end. Never boil a soup once it has cream, or it may split.

Allergens: contains milk, gluten, mustard and celery.

LEVEL 3 · SHRED

Slow-cooked pulled chicken

1 hour 30 minutes | 6 portions | cooking until it shreds

Thighs simmered in a sticky tomato and paprika sauce until they fall apart and can be shredded with two forks. Pile into rolls or on rice. Works in the oven, on the hob or in a slow cooker on high for 3 to 4 hours (never on low from raw).

INGREDIENTS (6 PORTIONS)

8	bone-in, skin-off chicken thighs
1	onion, finely chopped
3	garlic cloves, grated
2 tbsp	tomato paste
400 g	tin of chopped tomatoes
2 tbsp	dark brown sugar
2 tbsp	cider vinegar
2 tsp	smoked paprika
200 ml	water or stock
6	soft bread rolls

1. Mix everything except the chicken and rolls in a casserole, add the thighs and bring to a simmer on the hob.
2. Cover and cook at 160°C (140°C fan, gas 3) for **1 hour to 1 hour 15 minutes** until the meat falls off the bone.
3. Lift out the chicken, discard the bones, shred the meat with two forks, return it to the sauce and reduce a little. Serve in rolls.

> **RAW CHICKEN, HOT CASSEROLE AND BONES**
>
> **Raw chicken: the safety rules:** raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw

chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot casserole: a covered dish or pot of casserole is heavy, with scalding steam under the lid. Use dry oven gloves, lift the lid away from you, rest the dish on a heatproof surface, and use a ladle to serve.

Bones in stock: strain stock through a sieve before it goes near children or anyone eating from it, because small bones come loose in long simmering. Cooked chicken bones splinter, so never give them to dogs.

Hot oven and hot trays: ovens, trays and tins are hot enough to burn badly. Use dry oven gloves (a damp cloth conducts heat), pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Browned or pale

Flavour.

1. Make two small stews, one with browned chicken and one put in raw.

Look for: The browned stew has a deep, savoury sauce; the pale one tastes thinner and the skin is greasy and soft.

EXPERIMENT

Skin on or off

Richness.

1. Simmer thighs with skin and without, and compare the sauce.

Look for: Skin on gives a richer, fattier sauce (skim it); skin off is leaner and cleaner-tasting.

EXPERIMENT

Thighs or breasts

Tenderness.

1. Stew a thigh and a breast for 45 minutes.

Look for: The thigh is tender and juicy; the breast is stringy and dry, so use thighs for stewing.

EXPERIMENT

Lid on or ajar

Thickness.

1. Simmer one stew with the lid on and another with it ajar.

Look for: The ajar stew reduces and thickens; the covered stew stays thinner and the chicken stays moister.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Chicken and vegetable casserole				
Chicken chasseur-style stew				
Chicken and leek in a creamy sauce				
Pulled chicken				
Browned or pale				
Skin on or off				
Thighs or breasts				
Lid on or ajar				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Thin, watery sauce	Too much stock or lid on	Simmer uncovered or add a spoon of flour
Greasy stew	Skin or fat left in	Skim the fat; remove the skin
Tough chicken	Breast used or boiled hard	Use thighs and simmer gently
Pale, bland sauce	Chicken not browned	Brown in batches and scrape the pot
Split cream sauce	Boiled after cream	Warm gently
Raw near the bone	Not cooked long enough	Cook longer; the bone should be clean

HOT CASSEROLE, LEFTOVERS AND ALLERGENS

Hot casserole: a covered dish or pot of casserole is heavy, with scalding steam under the lid. Use dry oven gloves, lift the lid away from you, rest the dish on a heatproof surface, and use a ladle to serve.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can brown chicken in batches.
- ☐ I can build a casserole in one pot.
- ☐ I can make a sauce without wine.
- ☐ I can thicken a stew.
- ☐ I can shred slow-cooked chicken.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 7 is Leftovers and Cold Chicken: using a cooked bird safely.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 7 · Leftovers and Cold Chicken

SKILL GOAL

Turn a cooked chicken into several more meals, and store and reheat it safely.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A roast chicken is really two meals, and sometimes three: the dinner, the cold chicken next day, and the stock from the carcass (see Cooking Skills: Soups and Stocks 1, chapter 1). The key is to **strip the meat** from the carcass while it is still slightly warm, cool it quickly, and keep it cold. Cooked chicken keeps for 2 days in the fridge and 3 months in the freezer. **Don't reheat it more than once**, and always until it is steaming hot through.

Leftover chicken is already cooked, so it needs only warming through or none at all. Cold dishes need a dressing to stop them drying out: mayonnaise and yogurt are the classic choices. Warm dishes (quesadillas, hash) reheat the chicken in the dish, so the dish must reach steaming hot. For a Sunday roast to start with see Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 2, and for a hash base Cooking Skills: Potatoes 1, chapter 6.

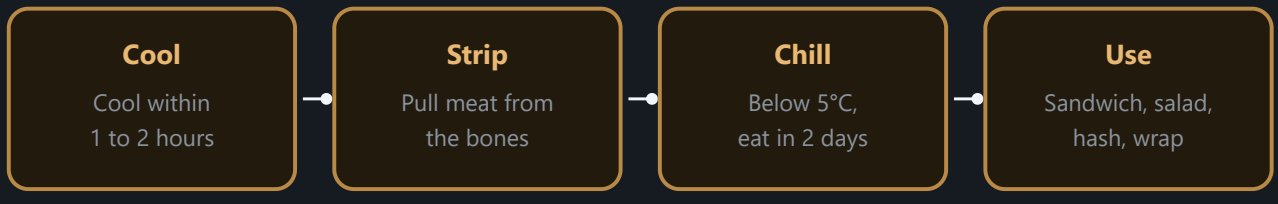


Figure 7. Cool, strip, chill and use: leftover chicken, safely.

The method

- **Cool the chicken quickly** and strip the meat from the carcass within 1 to 2 hours.

- **Chill it below 5°C** in a covered container and eat it within 2 days.
- **Dress cold dishes** with mayonnaise or yogurt to keep the meat moist.
- **Heat leftovers until steaming hot all through** when you cook with them.
- **Freeze extra meat** in flat, labelled bags, and use the carcass for stock.

DISH	HOT OR COLD	DRESSING OR BASE	TIME (APPROXIMATE)
Coronation-style sandwiches	Cold	Mayonnaise, curry, chutney	10 minutes
Chicken salad	Cold	Yogurt dressing	15 minutes
Quesadillas	Hot	Cheese, tortilla	15 minutes
Chicken hash	Hot	Potato, onion	30 minutes

COLD CHICKEN, REHEATING AND ALLERGENS

Cold chicken safety: cooked chicken for salads and sandwiches must be cooled quickly (within 1 to 2 hours), refrigerated below 5°C and eaten within 2 days. Keep it on its own shelf above raw foods, don't leave sandwiches out for more than 2 hours, and pack lunch boxes with an ice pack.

Reheat once, steaming hot: reheat cooked chicken only once, and until it is steaming hot all the way through (at least 75°C), not just warm. Don't reheat chicken that has been left out for more than 2 hours, and don't reheat rice or sauces more than once.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

Coronation-style chicken sandwiches

15 minutes | 4 portions | dressing cold chicken with a creamy, spiced mix

A British classic: cooked chicken in a mild curry mayonnaise with chutney, almonds and sultanas. It tastes better after an hour in the fridge. Serve in soft bread or on a jacket potato. Keep sandwiches cold.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

300 g	cooked chicken, shredded or diced
4 tbsp	mayonnaise
2 tbsp	plain Greek yogurt
2 tsp	mild curry powder
2 tbsp	mango chutney
2 tbsp	flaked almonds, toasted
2 tbsp	sultanas
1	lemon, juice
8	slices of soft bread

1. Mix the mayonnaise, yogurt, curry powder, chutney and lemon juice in a bowl.
2. Fold in the chicken, almonds and sultanas, season, and chill for **30 minutes** if time allows.
3. Spread on bread and keep cold until eaten.

COLD CHICKEN AND ALLERGENS

Cold chicken safety: cooked chicken for salads and sandwiches must be cooled quickly (within 1 to 2 hours), refrigerated below 5°C and eaten within 2 days. Keep it on its own shelf above raw foods, don't leave sandwiches out for more than 2 hours, and pack lunch boxes with an ice pack.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

> **Allergens:** contains egg, milk, nuts (almonds), gluten and sulphites (chutney).

LEVEL 2 · SALAD

A chicken salad with yogurt dressing

20 minutes | 4 portions | balancing cold chicken with crunch and acid

Cooked chicken with crisp lettuce, cucumber and tomato in a light lemon and yogurt dressing. It is lighter than mayonnaise and good for a lunch box. Add the dressing just before eating so the leaves stay crisp.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

300 g	cooked chicken, sliced
2	little gem lettuces, leaves separated
½	cucumber, sliced
200 g	cherry tomatoes, halved
4	spring onions, sliced
150 g	plain Greek yogurt
1	lemon, juice
1 tsp	wholegrain mustard
2 tbsp	chopped parsley

1. Whisk the yogurt, lemon juice, mustard and parsley with salt and pepper.
2. Arrange the lettuce, cucumber, tomatoes and spring onions on plates and top with the chicken.
3. Spoon over the dressing just before serving.

COLD CHICKEN AND ALLERGENS

Cold chicken safety: cooked chicken for salads and sandwiches must be cooled quickly (within 1 to 2 hours), refrigerated below 5°C and eaten within 2 days. Keep it on its own shelf above raw foods, don't leave sandwiches out for more than 2 hours, and pack lunch boxes with an ice pack.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

> **Allergens:** contains milk and mustard.

LEVEL 2 · HOT

Chicken quesadillas

20 minutes | 4 portions | reheating chicken through in a hot pan

Shredded chicken, cheese, sweetcorn and spring onion, sandwiched in tortillas and fried until crisp and melting. The chicken must be steaming hot all through. Cut into wedges and serve with salsa (Cooking Skills: Sauces 2, chapter 5).

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

250 g	cooked chicken, shredded
8	flour tortillas
150 g	mature Cheddar, grated
100 g	tinned sweetcorn, drained
3	spring onions, sliced
1 tsp	smoked paprika
1 tbsp	rapeseed oil

1. Mix the chicken, cheese, sweetcorn, spring onions and paprika. Spread over 4 tortillas and cover with the other 4.
2. Fry each quesadilla in a dry or lightly oiled pan over a medium heat for **3 to 4 minutes a side** until crisp and the cheese has melted.
3. Check the filling is steaming hot all through. Cut into wedges and serve with salsa.

REHEATING CHICKEN, HOT PAN AND ALLERGENS

Reheat once, steaming hot: reheat cooked chicken only once, and until it is steaming hot all the way through (at least 75°C), not just warm. Don't reheat chicken that has been left out for more than 2 hours, and don't reheat rice or sauces more than once.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is

in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Allergens: contains gluten and milk.

LEVEL 3 · SKILLET

A chicken hash

35 minutes | 4 portions | browning potatoes and warming chicken in one pan

Diced cooked potatoes browned in a big pan with onion, then the chicken and herbs added for the last few minutes. It uses leftover roast potatoes or boiled ones. Top with a fried egg if you like.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

500 g	cooked potatoes, diced
250 g	cooked chicken, diced
3 tbsp	rapeseed oil
1	onion, chopped
1	red pepper, diced
1 tsp	smoked paprika
2 tbsp	chopped parsley
1 tsp	Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce

1. Heat 2 tbsp oil in a large frying pan and fry the potatoes over a medium-high heat for **10 minutes** without stirring too much until golden. Remove.
2. Fry the onion and pepper in the remaining oil for 6 minutes, add the paprika, then return the potatoes with the chicken.
3. Cook for **6 to 8 minutes** until the chicken is steaming hot all through. Add the sauce and parsley and serve.

REHEATING CHICKEN, HOT OIL AND ALLERGENS

Reheat once, steaming hot: reheat cooked chicken only once, and until it is steaming hot all the way through (at least 75°C), not just warm. Don't reheat chicken that has been left out for more than 2 hours, and don't reheat rice or sauces more than once.

Hot pan and hot oil: roasting tins and frying pans for browning are very hot and fat spits. Use dry oven gloves, pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

> **Allergens:** chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

Warm or cold salad

Taste and texture.

1. Eat the chicken salad with warm chicken and then with chilled chicken.

Look for: Warm chicken is softer and more flavourful; cold chicken is firmer and better for a lunch box.

EXPERIMENT

Mayonnaise or yogurt

Richness.

1. Dress two portions of chicken, one with mayonnaise and one with yogurt.

Look for: Mayonnaise is rich and clings; yogurt is lighter and tangier but thinner and can weep.

EXPERIMENT

Reheated once

Safety and quality.

1. Reheat a portion of leftover chicken once, until steaming, and compare with one just warmed.

Look for: The steaming-hot portion is safe and moist; the barely-warm portion is not safe and tastes flat. Never reheat twice.

EXPERIMENT

Freezing the cooked meat

Quality.

1. Freeze some cooked chicken for a month and compare with fresh leftovers.

Look for: Properly wrapped frozen chicken is fine in hot dishes, but is a little drier and less good cold.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Coronation-style chicken sandwiches				
Chicken salad with yogurt dressing				
Chicken quesadillas				
Chicken hash				
Warm or cold salad				
Mayonnaise or yogurt				
Reheated once				
Freezing the cooked meat				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Dry cold chicken	No dressing or overcooked first time	Dress it and use thigh meat
Soggy salad	Dressed too early	Dress just before eating

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Cold in the middle	Not reheated through	Heat until steaming hot all through
Bland hash	Not seasoned	Season each stage and add paprika
Chicken smells	Kept too long	Throw it away if in doubt
Quesadilla leaks	Overfilled	Use less filling and press down

LEFTOVERS, REHEATING AND FREEZING

Cold chicken safety: cooked chicken for salads and sandwiches must be cooled quickly (within 1 to 2 hours), refrigerated below 5°C and eaten within 2 days. Keep it on its own shelf above raw foods, don't leave sandwiches out for more than 2 hours, and pack lunch boxes with an ice pack.

Reheat once, steaming hot: reheat cooked chicken only once, and until it is steaming hot all the way through (at least 75°C), not just warm. Don't reheat chicken that has been left out for more than 2 hours, and don't reheat rice or sauces more than once.

Freezing and defrosting chicken: freeze chicken on the day you buy it, in flat, labelled bags, for up to about 9 months raw or 3 months cooked (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within a day. Do not refreeze raw chicken that has defrosted unless you cook it first.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can strip and store a cooked chicken safely.
- ☐ I eat leftover chicken within 2 days.
- ☐ I know to reheat chicken only once.
- ☐ I can dress cold chicken.
- ☐ I can use the carcass for stock.

NEXT CHAPTER

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapter 8 is A Chicken Dinner: planning, timing and storing.

Cooking Skills: Chicken 1

Chapter 8 · A Chicken Dinner

SKILL GOAL

Plan, time and serve a chicken dinner, use the whole bird across the week, and store chicken safely.

Shopping list for this chapter

The basics

A chicken dinner is a timing exercise. The chicken needs about 1 hour 20 minutes and then a 20-minute rest, and everything else must be ready around it: potatoes roasting alongside, vegetables prepped, gravy made from the tin while the bird rests. Write the timeline **backwards** from the moment you sit down, and give each task a start time.

One chicken can give three meals: the roast dinner, a cold or reheated second meal (see chapter 7) and stock from the carcass (Cooking Skills: Soups and Stocks 1, chapter 1). This chapter brings the whole course together: Cooking Skills: Chicken 1, chapters 1 to 7. At the end you write a signature dish: your own cut, method and sauce.



Figure 8. A dinner is planned backwards from the moment you sit down.

The method

- **Plan the menu and timeline backwards** from the serving time.
- **Get the chicken in first;** everything else fits around it.

- **Check the chicken at 75°C** in the thigh, then rest it for 20 minutes.
- **Make the gravy and finish the vegetables** while the chicken rests.
- **Carve, serve and clear up,** then store the leftovers within 2 hours.

DAY	MEAL	FROM	NOTES
Sunday	Roast chicken dinner	Chapter 2	Cook a big bird; save the leftovers
Monday	Coronation-style sandwiches or salad	Chapter 7	Cold, from Sunday's chicken
Tuesday	Chicken stock and a broth	Cooking Skills: Soups and Stocks 1, chapter 1	From the carcass
Wednesday	Chicken thighs grilled or pan-fried	Chapters 3 and 4	Fresh thighs
Thursday	Chicken casserole	Chapter 6	A one-pot dinner

RAW CHICKEN, TIMING, STORING AND FREEZING

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Freezing and defrosting chicken: freeze chicken on the day you buy it, in flat, labelled bags, for up to about 9 months raw or 3 months cooked (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within a day. Do not refreeze raw chicken that has defrosted unless you cook it first.

Try it

LEVEL 1 · START HERE

A Sunday chicken dinner for four

2 hours | 4 portions | timing a roast dinner so everything is ready together

Roast chicken with roast potatoes, carrots and green beans, and gravy made in the tin. Follow the timeline: the chicken goes in first, the potatoes join after 30 minutes, and the vegetables and gravy come while the bird rests. Carve at the table.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

1.6 kg	whole chicken
900 g	floury potatoes, peeled and cut in chunks
4	carrots, cut in sticks
200 g	green beans, trimmed
50 g	butter
3 tbsp	olive oil
1 tbsp	plain flour
400 ml	chicken stock, unsalted

1. Roast the chicken at 200°C (180°C fan, gas 6) as in chapter 2, for about 1 hour 20 minutes. After 30 minutes, add the potatoes (par-boiled) in oil to a separate tray, and the carrots to the chicken's tin.
2. When the thigh reads 75°C, rest the chicken for **20 minutes** under foil. Boil the beans for 4 minutes and make the gravy in the tin with flour and stock.
3. Carve and serve with the potatoes, carrots, beans and gravy.

HOT OVEN, RAW CHICKEN AND TIMING

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Hot oven and hot trays: ovens, trays and tins are hot enough to burn badly. Use dry oven gloves (a damp cloth conducts heat), pull the shelf out a little before lifting a tray, put hot things

on a heatproof surface and keep children away.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Resting: resting lets the juices settle, but it is not a safety step: the chicken must already have reached its safe temperature. Rest it on a warm plate, loosely covered with foil, and keep it out of the 'danger zone' for no more than about 30 minutes before carving and serving.

LEVEL 2 · PLAN

A week of chicken meals

Planning: 20 minutes | 5 meals for 2 | planning a week around one roast and some fresh thighs

Plan five chicken meals for two, starting with a big Sunday roast. Use the leftovers on Monday, the carcass for stock on Tuesday, and add fresh thighs for Wednesday and Thursday. Freeze anything that won't be eaten within 2 days.

INGREDIENTS (5 MEALS FOR 2)

1.8 kg	whole chicken (Sunday)
6	boneless thighs (Wednesday)
8	bone-in thighs (Thursday)
1	pack of tortillas or bread for the leftovers
1	pack of freezer bags and a marker

1. On Sunday cook the big chicken and strip the leftover meat within 2 hours. Chill it, and put the carcass on to simmer for stock.
2. Write the plan: day, dish, cut and chapter. Check what is in the freezer.
3. Each evening cook the planned dish and tick it off. Freeze whatever won't be used within 2 days.

RAW CHICKEN, STORAGE AND FREEZING

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Freezing and defrosting chicken: freeze chicken on the day you buy it, in flat, labelled bags, for up to about 9 months raw or 3 months cooked (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within a day. Do not refreeze raw

chicken that has defrosted unless you cook it first.

Cooling and keeping stock: stock is an ideal place for bacteria to grow. Strain it, then cool it quickly in shallow containers or an ice bath, chill within 1 to 2 hours, and use within about 2 days (fish stock within 1 day) or freeze it. Never leave a big pot to cool slowly on the hob or worktop overnight. Reheat until steaming hot all the way through.

LEVEL 2 · FREEZER

Freezing and defrosting chicken

20 minutes | 4 portions | portioning, wrapping and defrosting raw chicken safely

Buy a family pack when chicken is on offer and freeze it in portions on the day you buy it. Wrap each piece tightly to avoid freezer burn and label with the date. Defrost in the fridge overnight, on a plate on the bottom shelf, and cook within a day.

INGREDIENTS (4 PORTIONS)

8	chicken pieces (thighs, drumsticks or breasts)
4	freezer bags
1	permanent marker
1	plate for defrosting

1. Pat the chicken dry. Put 2 pieces in each bag, press out the air, seal and label with the cut, date and use-by.
2. Freeze flat on a tray for **2 hours,** then stack. Use within about 9 months for raw chicken.
3. To defrost, put a bag on a plate on the bottom shelf of the fridge overnight, and cook within a day.

FREEZING AND RAW CHICKEN

Freezing and defrosting chicken: freeze chicken on the day you buy it, in flat, labelled bags, for up to about 9 months raw or 3 months cooked (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within a day. Do not refreeze raw chicken that has defrosted unless you cook it first.

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through.

> Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

LEVEL 3 · SIGNATURE

Your signature chicken dish

Your choice | your choice | designing a chicken dish from your favourite methods

Choose a cut, a method (roast, pan-fry, grill, poach or stew) and a sauce or flavour, then write the recipe as you cook it. Make it twice, changing one thing. A signature dish is one you can cook without a recipe.

INGREDIENTS (YOUR CHOICE)

1	cut of chicken (about 150 g a person)
1	method from chapters 2 to 6
1	sauce or flavour of your choice
1	notebook and pen

1. Choose your cut, method and sauce, and write them down before you start.
2. Cook it, noting the times and temperatures, and checking it reaches 75°C.
3. Cook it again with your change, then write the final recipe on a card.

RAW CHICKEN AND ALLERGENS

Raw chicken: the safety rules: raw chicken often carries campylobacter and salmonella. Never wash it (the splashes spread bacteria around the kitchen), keep it covered on the bottom shelf of the fridge, use its own board, knife and tongs, wash your hands, boards and tools in hot soapy water afterwards, and never put cooked food back on a plate or board that held raw chicken. Use it by the use-by date, or freeze it on the day you buy it.

Is it cooked? Use a thermometer: chicken is safe when the thickest part reaches 75°C (or 70°C held for 2 minutes), the meat is white all the way through with no pink, and the juices run clear (general guidance, in line with current FSA advice). Push a probe thermometer into the thickest part without touching bone, and for a whole bird check the thickest part of the thigh. If in doubt, cook it longer.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

Experiments

EXPERIMENT

A timed dinner

Planning.

1. Cook a full chicken dinner with a timer, writing down when each task started and finished.

Look for: The chicken sets the pace; start the slow items first and give each task a time.

EXPERIMENT

Swapping the cut

Flexibility.

1. Cook the same recipe with thighs instead of breasts.

Look for: Thighs are more forgiving and tastier but take longer; note how timing and flavour change.

EXPERIMENT

Freezing against fresh

Quality.

1. Cook a fresh thigh and one frozen for a month, the same way.

Look for: Well-wrapped chicken loses very little; badly wrapped is dry at the edges. Wrapping matters.

EXPERIMENT

Your own signature dish

Making it yours.

1. Cook your signature dish for a friend and ask for one comment.

Look for: A repeated dish improves every time. Write it down.

Tasting notes

WHAT I TRIED	METHOD OR AMOUNT	WHAT I SAW	WHAT I THOUGHT	WILL I DO IT AGAIN?
Sunday chicken dinner				
Week of chicken meals				
Freezing and defrosting chicken				
Signature chicken dish				
A timed dinner				
Swapping the cut				
Freezing against fresh				
Your own signature dish				

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Chicken ready but sides not	Poor timing	Write the timeline backwards
Cold dinner	Plates cold or rest too long	Warm the plates; rest for 20 minutes only
Dry frozen chicken	Freezer burn	Wrap tightly; use within the time
Gravy lumpy	Flour clumped	Whisk into the fat first, then add stock slowly

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Leftovers go off	Kept too long	Eat within 2 days or freeze
Week plan falls apart	Too ambitious	Plan fewer cooking days

STORING, FREEZING AND ALLERGENS

Leftover chicken: cool cooked chicken quickly (within about 1 to 2 hours), cover and refrigerate, and eat within 2 days. Reheat only once, until steaming hot all the way through. Never leave chicken on the table for more than 2 hours. Cooked chicken can be frozen for up to about 3 months.

Freezing and defrosting chicken: freeze chicken on the day you buy it, in flat, labelled bags, for up to about 9 months raw or 3 months cooked (general guidance). Defrost it in the fridge on a plate on the bottom shelf, never on the worktop, and cook it within a day. Do not refreeze raw chicken that has defrosted unless you cook it first.

Allergens: chicken itself is not a major allergen, but the dishes around it often contain milk, gluten, egg, mustard, celery, soya and sesame. Check stock cubes and sauces, tell guests what is in a dish, and use separate tools for anyone with an allergy.

CHECKPOINT: CAN YOU DO THIS NOW?

- ☐ I can plan a dinner backwards from serving time.
- ☐ I can cook and rest a whole chicken.
- ☐ I can freeze and defrost chicken safely.
- ☐ I can use a chicken three ways.
- ☐ I have a signature chicken dish.

NEXT CHAPTER

Congratulations: you have finished Cooking Skills: Chicken 1. Chicken 2 (spatchcocking and butchery, fried chicken, curries and stir-fries, world chicken dishes) is planned separately.