

Chicken Under A Brick

By Mark Bittman | YIELD 4 servings |

INGREDIENTS

1 whole 3- to 4-pound chicken, trimmed of excess fat, rinsed, dried and split, backbone removed
1 tablespoon fresh minced rosemary or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon peeled and coarsely chopped garlic
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 sprigs fresh rosemary, optional
1 lemon, cut into quarters

PREPARATION

Step 1

Place the chicken on a cutting board, skin side down, and using your hands, press down hard to make it as flat as possible. Mix together the rosemary leaves, salt, pepper, garlic and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil, and rub this all over the chicken. Tuck some of the mixture under the skin as well. If time permits, cover and marinate in the refrigerator for up to a day (even 20 minutes of marinating boosts the flavor).

Step 2

When you are ready to cook, preheat the oven to 500 degrees. Preheat an ovenproof 12-inch skillet (preferably nonstick) over medium-high heat for about 3 minutes. Press rosemary sprigs, if using, into the skin side of the chicken. Put remaining olive oil in the pan and wait about 30 seconds for it to heat up.

Step 3

Place the chicken in the skillet, skin side down, along with any remaining pieces of rosemary and garlic; weight it with another skillet or with one or two bricks or rocks, wrapped in aluminum foil. The idea is to flatten the chicken by applying weight evenly over its surface.

Step 4

Cook over medium-high to high heat for 5 minutes, then transfer to the oven. Roast for 15 minutes more. Remove from the oven and remove the weights; turn the chicken over (it will now be skin side up) and roast 10 minutes more, or until done (large chickens may take an additional 5 minutes or so). Serve hot or at room temperature, with lemon wedges.

Tip

Variations: Use different herbs; sage, savory and tarragon are all great. Russians use

paprika. Try a light dusting of cinnamon, ginger and/or other "sweet" spice. Use minced shallots instead of garlic. Vary the acidic ingredient: balsamic or Sherry vinegar, or lime can all pinch-hit for the lemon, depending upon the other flavors. Use clarified butter or a neutral oil, like canola or corn, in place of the olive oil. Leave European flavors behind entirely and make the dish Asian, using peanut oil and a mixture of minced garlic, ginger and scallions. Finish the dish with lime and cilantro, or soy sauce and sesame oil.

PRIVATE NOTES

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