

Braised Chicken in Lemon-Basil Sauce

10 minutes / Quick steam release

Braised chicken usually requires browning, then cooking for 45 minutes. Amazingly, you don't need the skin for flavor or color when pressure cooking, and it takes just a fraction of the time. Serve with rice or orzo to soak up the lemony sauce.

Cut each chicken breast in half crosswise so that all 8 pieces are about the same size, which is important for even cooking. Season the chicken lightly all over with salt.

In a pressure cooker, brown the chicken in 1 Tbs. of the butter and the olive oil in batches, turning with tongs as necessary; transfer each batch to a plate as it is browned. After removing the final batch, add the shallots to the pot and stir for 30 seconds. Pour in the wine and cook for 1 minute; add the broth, lemon zest and lemon juice. Put the lemon slices in the pot. Return the chicken to the pot, stacking the pieces so that the breasts are on top. If using an electric pressure cooker, switch off the browning function.

Lock the lid into place and cook on high pressure for 10 minutes. Quick-release the steam. When the pressure valve drops, remove the lid, tilting it away from your face to allow residual steam to escape.

Using tongs, transfer the chicken to a serving platter and cover loosely with foil. Strain the juices from the pot through a sieve into a fry pan; reserve the lemon slices. Boil on the stovetop over high heat until the juices are reduced by one-third, about 5 minutes. Cut the remaining 2 Tbs. butter into 4 pieces and add to the fry pan; swirl the pan until the butter is melted, then turn off the heat. Stir in the basil, season with salt and pour the sauce over the chicken. Garnish with the reserved lemon slices and serve immediately. Serves 4 to 6.

Adapted from *The Pressure Cooker Cookbook*, by Tori Ritchie (Weldon Owen, 2010).

Creamy Rice Pudding

15 minutes / Quick steam release

Coconut milk gives this rice pudding a creamy texture and a hint of coconut flavor.

Rinse the rice and drain. Place the rice, whole milk, coconut milk, water, sugar, the 2 tsp. cinnamon and the salt in a pressure cooker pot. Select the “sauté” setting and bring the mixture to a low boil, stirring constantly to dissolve the sugar. As soon as the mixture comes to a boil, cover and lock the lid into place and cook on low pressure for 15 minutes.

Quick-release the steam. When the pressure valve drops, remove the lid, tilting it away from your face to allow residual steam to escape. Add the vanilla and dried fruit and stir. Place the cover on the pot but do not turn on the pressure cooker. Let stand for 15 minutes, then stir and serve. Garnish each portion with a sprinkling of cinnamon and a dollop of whipped cream. Makes 6 cups.

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Ingredients for Braised Chicken in Lemon-Basil Sauce

1 chicken, about 3½ lb., cut into pieces and skin removed

Salt, to taste

3 Tbs. unsalted butter

1 Tbs. olive oil

2 Tbs. minced shallots

⅓ cup dry white wine or dry vermouth

½ cup low-sodium chicken broth

1½ tsp. grated lemon zest

¼ cup fresh lemon juice

6 paper-thin lemon slices, seeds removed

⅓ cup chopped fresh basil

Ingredients for Creamy Rice Pudding

1½ cups Arborio or Carnaroli rice

2 cups whole milk

1 can (14 fl. oz.) light coconut milk

1 cup water

½ cup sugar

2 tsp. ground cinnamon, plus more for serving (optional)

½ tsp. salt

1½ tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup dried tart cherries, dried cubed mango or papaya, or golden raisins

Whipped cream for serving (optional)

Why Use a Pressure Cooker?

- Contemporary models are safe and reliable.
- Less cooking time means more energy saved.
- Healthy foods, such as whole grains, beans and legumes, cook quickly, while retaining more nutrients.
- Comfort foods can be prepared on a weeknight schedule.
- Vegetables, potatoes and even risotto need no tending when cooked under pressure.
- Dishes cook in one-third to one-half the time.

Adapted from *The Pressure Cooker Cookbook*, by Tori Ritchie (Weldon Owen, 2010).

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Technique Class: Pressure Cooking Basics

Healthier Way to Cook

Because everything cooks faster in a pressure cooker, and only a small amount of liquid is needed, fewer nutrients are leached or evaporated away as they are in other types of cooking. Some people have a cooker on hand just to make high-fiber, protein-rich beans weekly or even daily, or to cook whole-grain brown rice or farro at the last minute, both of which contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

Pressure Cookers for Today

Everyone seems to be looking for a new way to save time in the kitchen, but the solution has been there all along: pressure cookers. These ingenious devices, originally marketed in the early 1900s, were designed to speed up cooking by using a simple principle: seal the lid to create pressure, which causes the temperature in the pot to rise past boiling, and food cooks faster. No invisible microwaves, no food-altering science, just simple, clean steam.

Fast-forward to today and pressure cookers have many compelling reasons for their renewed popularity. Many dishes that are too often relegated to Sunday dinner or ordered in restaurants because they take too long to prepare at home—pot roast, short ribs, baked beans—can be prepared in one-half to two-thirds the time it takes to cook them conventionally. You don't even have to plan ahead. But pressure cookers also help the home cook save money. The foods cooked in a pressure cooker are generally tougher and less desirable than more tender foods, and thus less expensive. Finally, pressure cookers keep in foods' nutrients. While these cooking vessels allow you to make comforting meals on a weeknight schedule, pressure cookers are also a perfect addition to a healthy lifestyle.

Modern Pressure Cooking

The pressure cooker isn't a new tool, but it is a completely redesigned one. Today's pressure cookers have built-in safety features, including secure pressure-regulator valves and at least three backup systems to release steam in the event of a blockage. A modern stovetop pressure cooker simply cannot be opened while still cooking under pressure. Recently, electric pressure cookers have been introduced, adding increased safety, convenience and ease for the home cook.

Part of the pressure cooker's popularity is the increased awareness today of health and whole foods. There is an environmentally friendly aspect to cooking under pressure, too. Because it takes far less time to cook a dish, less gas or electricity is used. And saving energy is good for everyone.

Ingredients for Chickpeas with Lemon, Oregano and Olives

1½ cups dried chickpeas

6 cups water

4 garlic cloves, peeled

1 bay leaf

½ tsp. salt, plus more, to taste

5 Tbs. olive oil

1½ cups packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

2 Tbs. chopped fresh oregano

1 Tbs. coarsely grated lemon zest

About 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice

½ cup pitted good-quality green olives, roughly chopped

Chickpeas with Lemon, Oregano and Olives

40 minutes / Natural steam release

Like most beans, chickpeas can take 2 hours to cook. Here, they quickly emerge with a meaty texture and flavor that's more satisfying than canned. Serve with grilled lamb, chicken or fish, or alone as a vegetarian entrée.

Rinse the chickpeas in a sieve under cold water. Pick over and remove any stones or misshapen chickpeas. In a pressure cooker pot, combine the chickpeas, water, 2 of the garlic cloves, the bay leaf and the ½ tsp. salt. Drizzle 1 Tbs. of the olive oil over the liquid.

Lock the lid into place and cook on high pressure for 40 minutes. Let the steam release naturally. When the pressure valve drops, remove the lid, tilting it away from your face to allow residual steam to escape. Test a chickpea for doneness: it should be cooked through but not soft. If it is too firm, lock the lid into place again and cook on high pressure for 5 minutes more; quick-release the steam.

Drain the chickpeas in a colander, reserving the cooking liquid. Discard the bay leaf. Clean and dry the pressure cooker pot. (At this point, the chickpeas and the liquid can be cooled, covered and refrigerated separately for up to 1 day. To continue, let them come to room temperature before proceeding with the recipe.)

On a cutting board, mince together the parsley, oregano, the remaining 2 garlic cloves and the lemon zest. In the pressure cooker pot (or a sauté pan on the stovetop, if the chickpeas were made ahead), sauté the herb-garlic mixture in the remaining 4 Tbs. olive oil until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the cooked chickpeas, lemon juice, 1 cup reserved cooking liquid and the olives; stir for a few minutes until the flavors are blended, adding more cooking liquid if the mixture seems dry. Season with salt and more lemon juice, to taste, then serve. Serves 6.

Adapted from *The Pressure Cooker Cookbook*, by Tori Ritchie (Weldon Owen, 2010).

Parmesan Risotto

6 minutes / Quick steam release

It's true: you can make a fantastic risotto in one-quarter of the time in a pressure cooker. Vary this basic recipe with a pinch of saffron for risotto Milanese, a specialty of Milan, or stir in a cup of peas, beans or other cooked vegetables at the end.

In a pressure cooker pot, sauté the shallots in the butter and olive oil until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the rice and saffron and cook, stirring, for 1 minute to toast slightly. Pour in the wine and stir until it evaporates. Pour in 3½ cups of the broth. If using an electric pressure cooker, switch off the sauté function.

Lock the lid into place and cook on high pressure for 6 minutes. Quick-release the steam. When the pressure valve drops, remove the lid, tilting it away from your face to allow residual steam to escape.

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Stir the rice and taste for doneness: it should be al dente and the liquid should be soupy. If it is not done, stir in the remaining ½ cup broth and cook over medium-high heat (or use the sauté function on an electric cooker), stirring, until the rice is cooked. Turn off the heat and stir in the ½ cup grated cheese. Serve, adding cheese shavings to each portion. Serves 4.

Adapted from *The Pressure Cooker Cookbook*, by Tori Ritchie (Weldon Owen, 2010).

Italian Bean and Pasta Soup

22 minutes / Natural steam release

When the weather is cool and you feel like staying indoors, it's time to make pasta e fagioli, a favorite Italian meal in a bowl. It can be brothy or quite thick, depending upon personal taste. Cooking the pasta separately from the soup helps the pasta maintain its texture. If you have made the soup in advance, add the cooked pasta when reheating the soup, as the pasta can become mushy if it stands too long in the soup. If you forget to soak the dried beans overnight, increase the pressure cooker time to 35 minutes.

Heat a pressure cooker on the stovetop or turn an electric pressure cooker to the sauté function and warm the olive oil. Add the pancetta and sauté, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the onion, carrots, celery and garlic and sauté, stirring often, until softened, about 8 minutes. Add the water, beans and tomatoes and bring to a boil.

Lock the lid into place and cook on high pressure for 22 minutes. Let the steam release naturally for 10 minutes and then quick-release the remainder of the steam. When the pressure valve drops, remove the lid, tilting it away from your face to allow residual steam to escape. Test a bean for doneness: it should be cooked through and soft. If it is too firm, lock the lid into place again and cook on high pressure for 5 minutes more; quick-release the steam.

To give the soup more body, remove 2 large spoonfuls of beans and vegetables and puree in a blender or food processor, then return the puree to the pressure cooker. Season with salt (about 2 tsp.) and pepper and reheat gently.

When the soup is almost ready, bring a large saucepan three-fourths full of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta, stir well and cook until barely al dente (tender but firm to the bite), about 8 minutes or according to the package instructions. Drain the pasta and add it to the soup. Simmer for 5 minutes more.

To serve, ladle the soup into warmed bowls. Top each serving with a swirl of extra-virgin olive oil, some grated cheese and a generous grinding of pepper. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Lifestyles Series, *Soup for Supper*, by Joyce Goldstein (Time-Life Books, 1998).

Ingredients for Italian Bean and Pasta Soup

3 Tbs. olive oil

½ cup chopped pancetta

1 yellow onion, chopped

2 carrots, peeled and chopped

2 celery stalks, chopped

4 large garlic cloves, minced

8 cups water or chicken stock, or as needed

2 cups dried cranberry, cannellini or other small white beans, soaked overnight

1½ cups diced canned plum tomatoes

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

½ lb. small dried pasta, such as shells or ditalini

Extra-virgin olive oil for serving

Grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese for serving