



Chapter Nine

SZECHUAN ROASTED WHOLE CHICKEN



Gordon Ramsay Teaches Cooking II: Restaurant Recipes at Home

SZECHUAN ROASTED WHOLE CHICKEN

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Treat this bird
with respect and
I promise it will
come around
tenfold.

Chapter Review

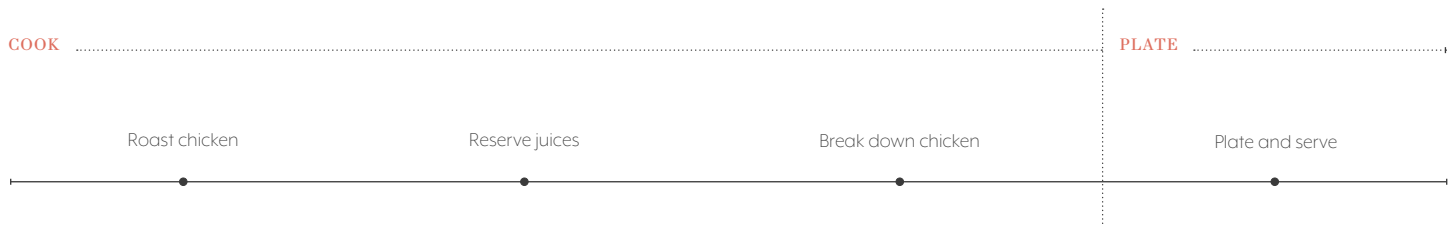
In this chapter, Gordon teaches you how to roast a chicken whole and then use different cuts to execute recipes in the next two chapters. Be sure to let the chicken come to temp as you did with the duck in Chapter Three and the rack of lamb in Chapter Five.

Once the meat has come to temp, season the cavity so that the juices running through the meat during cooking make contact with seasoning at every point. Then, stuff the cavity with large wedges of vegetables and aromatics. Not only do they add flavor, they also help the chicken keep its shape during cooking. That makes for an easier carve later on and helps the juices circulate evenly.

The trick to getting the salt and Szechuan pepper mix to stick to the skin of the chicken is to brush it with egg yolk. The yolk will also help the skin turn golden brown. Gordon's cooking method for the chicken—trussing it, elevating with a grate, and placing it in the center of the oven—helps ensure even heat circulation for even cooking. Trussing the chicken fastens the legs and wings close to the body so that all of the flesh cooks evenly and the wings and legs don't brown too quickly. If you notice the chicken getting color too quickly, cover with foil for 10 minutes.

Like any protein, it's important to let the chicken rest after cooking so that the juices can re-circulate throughout the meat. If you slice into the meat while still hot, it will immediately dry out. The chicken jus will be the secret ingredient of the ramen broth in Chapter Eleven.

RECIPE TIMELINE



SZECHUAN ROASTED WHOLE CHICKEN



Storing Meat

From Gordon Ramsay's Home Cooking, reproduced courtesy of the author and Hachette Book Group, USA.

Once you get your meat home, you need to keep it correctly. Meat needs to breathe, so remove any plastic wrapping right away. This is particularly important with vacuum-packed cuts, which will otherwise marinate in their own blood and take on a nasty metallic taste. Put the meat on a plate loosely covered with paper or plastic wrap pierced with a few holes and place it at the bottom of the fridge so it can't drip onto any other foods. If you choose to freeze meat, wrap it up tightly in plastic wrap to keep water crystals from forming on the surface and chill it as quickly as possible. Always defrost meat slowly, ideally in the fridge or at room temperature. Never defrost raw meat in the microwave or the juices will seep out and the meat will toughen.

Prep

- The chicken can be stored in the refrigerator for up to seven days.

Ingredient Notes

- Szechuan pepper isn't hot like chili peppers or spicy like black peppercorns. It has a lemony overtone and is referred to as a "numbing" spice because of its unique property that makes your mouth tingle. It's one of the key ingredients in the Chinese five-spice you'll make in Chapter Three: Crispy Five Spiced Duck. The Szechuan pepper mix in this recipe is enough for one chicken but can be made in bulk. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for up to three years—around six months it will start to become less potent.

SZECHUAN ROASTED WHOLE CHICKEN

Take It Further

- Make chicken stock with the reserved carcass following Gordon's recipe on the following pages.
- If you know you aren't going to be able to use every part of the chicken within a week, you can break down the chicken before cooking, cook only what you plan to use, and freeze the other portions. Learn more about this in Chapter Eight of Gordon's first MasterClass.
- Read Gordon's tips for buying, storing, and prepping chicken on the following pages.
- You can save bones from a previous chicken carcass in the freezer for later. Another option is to make stock after stripping the meat off a chicken as you're cooking the meat. Also, you can use a pack of chicken wings in lieu of a carcass, but don't save the meat. Since you want tendons and bones and sinew, save your money.
- Don't use the same pan to brown the chicken as you are using to make the stock. Adding cold water to a hot pan is a quick way to warp the pan, reducing the usability of it.

HOMEMADE CHICKEN STOCK*Additional recipe / Courtesy of Econovangelism.com*

1 chicken carcass, chopped into rough pieces
1 onion, chopped into quarters
1 leek, chopped into thick one-inch pieces
1 carrot, chopped into one-inch pieces
2 celery Sticks, chopped into one-inch pieces
1 garlic bulb, chopped in half (don't worry about peeling)
1 sprig of Thyme
2 bay Leaves
Fresh parsley to taste
Peppercorns to taste, gently crushed

1. (Optional) brown the pieces of chicken carcasses.
2. Throw all of the ingredients into a large saucepan and then cover with cold water.
3. Quickly bring to a boil.
4. Skim the top of grease off the stock using a ladle to help keep the stock clear and not cloudy as it boils.
5. Let it boil for 30 to 40 minutes, skimming once or twice.
6. Place a sieve over a large pan and put down a cheesecloth into the sieve.
7. Pour the stock into the cheesecloth, catching any impurities and small bits into the sieve while allowing the stock to flow into the pan below.
8. Discard what the sieve caught and you're done.

Szechuan Pepper Roasted Whole Chicken Stuffed With Lemon, Fennel, Onion, and Thai Basil

Serves 4-6, family style

Szechuan Pepper Mix

2 tablespoons black peppercorns, crushed
1½ tablespoons Szechuan peppercorns,
crushed

Combine and reserve for chicken.

Crush the peppercorns using the back of a pan, a mortar and pestle, or a blender. If you use a blender, pulse the peppercorns—do not run the blender at full speed, as this will grind it too finely.

Lemon Salt

3 Meyer lemons
3 tablespoons Maldon salt

Zest Meyer lemons into a mortar and pestle and add Maldon salt. Crush the zest and salt together until fragrant and broken down. Store in an airtight container, in a plastic or ceramic container wrapped tightly with plastic wrap, or a zip-lock bag in a cool, dry place for up to two weeks.

Roasted Chicken

1 3-pound whole chicken, cleaned
½ white onion, peeled and halved lengthwise
½ lemon, halved lengthwise
½ fennel bulb, halved lengthwise
4 sprigs Thai basil
2 egg yolks
3 tablespoons Szechuan pepper mix
4 tablespoons lemon salt

Preheat oven to 400°F. Allow chicken to come to room temperature before preparing. Stand the chicken neck side down on a sheet tray with the legs upwards and facing you. Season the cavity of the chicken with 1 to 2 tablespoons of lemon salt. Stuff the onion, lemon, and fennel wedges into the cavity so that the carcass will hold a nice rounded shape and not collapse while roasting. Stuff the Thai basil bunch last, into the center of the cavity with the leaves facing outward.

Whisk the egg yolks together to make an egg wash. Brush the chicken liberally with the egg wash over any visible part of the chicken skin, minus the backside of the chicken. This will act as a glue for the seasoning to stick. Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of Szechuan pepper mix and 4 tablespoons lemon salt over every inch of the chicken. Be sure to spread open the wings and legs and rub seasoning in all the crevasses to ensure maximum flavor in the meat and drippings.

Szechuan Pepper Roasted Whole Chicken Stuffed With Lemon, Fennel, Onion, and Thai Basil

Serves 4-6, family style

Roasted Chicken *Continued*

To Truss:

Use a 2-foot piece of butchers twine to truss the chicken.

Wrap the twine around the body lengthwise so the middle section of the twine is at the neck area and each side of the twine is touching the wings and the thighs (under the drumstick). Bring the twine ends together and cross. Tighten the twine and pull the rest of the twine over the ankles.

Wrap each side of the twine around the ankles to bring the legs close to the body. Tighten the twine and wrap around the ankles once again, moving outward, to make the ankles touch each other and finish by tying the twine ends together into a bow. Make sure the twine is holding the wings and legs in place tight enough to ensure a plump shape for the chicken during roasting.

To Cook:

Place a wire rack between the chicken and the sheet tray to ensure that even the bottom of the chicken skin gets crisp. Roast in the center rack of the oven for 60 minutes, or until the internal temperature of the leg joint area reaches 165°F. Remove from oven and rest for 10 minutes. Use a paring knife or scissors to cut the butchers twine at the point where the ankles meet. Carefully remove the twine and discard. Gently open up the legs and wings to allow the chicken to release heat. Drain the juices from the cavity and the sheet tray into a sieve over a bowl. Reserve the juices at room temperature if you are preparing the dish in Chapter Eleven: Szechuan Crusted Chicken Breast or refrigerate in a sealed container for up to seven days.

Szechuan Pepper Roasted Whole Chicken Stuffed With Lemon, Fennel, Onion, and Thai Basil

Serves 4-6, family style

Roasted Chicken *Continued*

To Carve:

Place the chicken on a cutting board with the legs facing toward you. Place your knife between the left leg and left breast and use the knife to gently push the leg away from the breast and cavity. Make an incision where the leg and breast meet and cut to the leg joint. If you are not familiar with butchering a chicken, use your hand to bend the leg and look for the leg joint between the thigh and the carcass. Roll the whole chicken on its right side and bend the leg further away from the breast and back. This action should snap the ball joint to dislocate the leg bone. Lay the whole chicken with its back on the cutting board. Cut through the separated leg joint. Repeat the same steps for the right leg.

Rotate the chicken so the breasts now face you. Cut lengthwise between the breasts to the sternum. Run the knife down to the top of the sternum and use pressure to cut through the wishbone with the tip of the knife. Run the tip of the knife from the bottom of where the breasts meet to the wishbone area over and over, staying parallel to the sternum. Each knife stroke should cut deeper and release the breast from the body further. Locate where the wing joint meets the back and cut down to the cutting board to remove the breast/wing section from the carcass. Repeat the same steps for the second breast.

To finish carving the chicken, take the legs back to the center of the cutting board. Hold the leg vertically by the ankle with the thigh touching the cutting board. Cut down through the thigh and drumstick joint to separate the pieces. Reserve the carcass for chicken stock.

Arrange the carved sections on a platter to serve or reserve for separate preparations.