



Best Chicken Stew

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 15: Comfort Food Revisited

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

In working to make a chicken stew that could satisfy like its beef brethren, we looked to two different chicken parts: We seared well-exercised wings to provide rich chicken flavor and plenty of thickening gelatin, and then we gently simmered bite-size pieces of boneless chicken thighs for tender bites throughout the stew. To boost meatiness, we used a combination of bacon, soy sauce, and anchovy paste. Finally we took full advantage of the concentrating effect of reduction by cooking down wine, broth, and aromatics at the start and simmering the stew uncovered during its stay in the oven.

Serves 6 to 8

Mashed anchovy fillets (rinsed and dried before mashing) can be used instead of anchovy paste. Use small red potatoes measuring 1 1/2 inches in diameter.

INGREDIENTS

- 2** pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, halved crosswise and trimmed
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 3** slices bacon, chopped
- 1** pound chicken wings, halved at joint
- 1** onion, chopped fine
- 1** celery rib, minced
- 2** garlic cloves, minced
- 2** teaspoons anchovy paste
- 1** teaspoon minced fresh thyme
- 5** cups chicken broth
- 1** cup dry white wine, plus extra for seasoning
- 1** tablespoon soy sauce
- 3** tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 3 pieces
- 1/3** cup all-purpose flour
- 1** pound small red potatoes, unpeeled, quartered
- 4** carrots, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 2** tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Adjust oven rack to lower-middle position and heat oven to 325 degrees. Arrange chicken thighs on baking sheet and lightly season both sides with salt and pepper; cover with plastic wrap and set aside.
2. Cook bacon in large Dutch oven over medium low heat, stirring occasionally, until fat renders and bacon browns, 6 to 8 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to medium bowl. Add chicken wings to pot, increase heat to medium, and cook until well browned on both sides, 10 to 12 minutes; transfer wings to bowl with bacon.
3. Add onion, celery, garlic, anchovy paste, and thyme to fat in pot; cook, stirring occasionally, until dark fond forms on pan bottom, 2 to 4 minutes. Increase heat to high; stir in 1 cup broth, wine, and soy sauce, scraping up any browned bits; and bring to boil. Cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid evaporates and vegetables begin to sizzle again, 12 to 15 minutes. Add butter and stir to melt; sprinkle flour over vegetables and stir to combine. Gradually whisk in remaining 4 cups broth until smooth. Stir in wings and bacon, potatoes, and carrots; bring to simmer. Transfer to oven and cook, uncovered, for 30 minutes, stirring once halfway through cooking.
4. Remove pot from oven. Use wooden spoon to draw gravy up sides of pot and scrape browned fond into stew. Place over high heat, add thighs, and bring to simmer. Return pot to oven, uncovered, and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken offers no resistance when poked with fork and vegetables are tender, about 45 minutes longer. (Stew can be refrigerated for up to 2 days.)
5. Discard wings and season stew with up to 2 tablespoons extra wine. Season with salt and pepper to taste, sprinkle with parsley, and serve.

TECHNIQUE

BUILDING A RICH, FLAVORFUL GRAVY

START WITH BACON AND WINGS: Brown chopped bacon, then sear halved wings in rendered fat to develop meaty depth. Set bacon and wings aside.



ENHANCE FLAVOR BASE: Sauté aromatics, thyme, and anchovy paste in fat to create rich fond. Add chicken broth, wine, and soy sauce, then boil until liquid evaporates.



COOK GRAVY: Cook reserved bacon and wings (with potatoes and carrots) in more broth. This extracts flavor from meats and body-enhancing collagen from wings (later discarded).



TECHNIQUE

THIS IS FOND, TOO

We often use liquid to release the browned bits, or fond, that remain on the bottom of the pan after meat has been sautéed or pan-seared; this enables us to easily stir the fond into the dish. These bits are packed with the complex flavors that are created by the Maillard reaction and can greatly enhance the flavor of a braise or a sauce. We found that leaving the lid off our chicken stew as it cooked in the oven led to the development of fond on the sides of the Dutch oven as well. To take advantage of this flavor-packed substance, we deglazed the sides by wetting them with a bit of gravy and scraping it into the stew with a spatula. The result? A considerable flavor boost.



SCRAPE THE DARK RING INTO THE STEW

