Instant Pot Pulled Chicken Recipe

Prep: 5 mins

Cook: 5 mins

Pressure Build/Release: 15 mins

Total: 25 mins

Servings: 6 to 8 servings

Yield: 2 pounds

Pulled chicken is versatile and easy to adapt to a wide range of recipes, from tacos to sandwiches to salads. It also happens to be incredibly easy to make, especially if you use the Instant Pot. The pressure cooker function makes the process quick and frees you up to prep other dishes or make a homemade sauce.

All you'll need is some chicken breasts and broth. Add a few garlic cloves and a bay leaf for flavor if you have them handy. The chicken cooks in just 5 minutes (plus a few minutes for the cooker to come up to pressure and release). By shredding the chicken directly in the cooking liquid, it stays nice and moist. After shredding, you're ready to chow down or pack away the chicken for meal prep.

Serve Instant Pot pulled chicken tossed with our easy barbecue sauce. It's great served as barbecue sandwiches, topping a barbecue chicken salad or pizza, and more. Or toss the chicken with taco seasoning, pesto, teriyaki sauce, or another sauce of your choice.

Ingredients

For the Chicken:

- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- Salt, to taste

Optional Barbecue Sauce:

- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Steps to Make It

- 1. Gather the ingredients.
- 2. Add the chicken, garlic, and bay leaf to the Instant Pot. Pour in the broth, using just enough to mostly cover the chicken breasts—they don't need to be completely submerged. Season with salt, secure the lid making sure the vent is sealed.
- 3. Cook at high pressure for 5 minutes. Once the cook time has ended, use a natural release for 5 minutes, then release any remaining pressure using a quick release.
- 4. While the chicken cooks, make the barbecue sauce, if desired. Combine the ketchup, vinegar, brown sugar, smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt, and pepper in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, then reduce the heat to low and cook for 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Set aside.
- 5. Discard the bay leaf. Check the chicken for doneness—the chicken should register 165 F on a digital thermometer.
- 6. Remove the inner pot from the cooker. With a fork, mash the garlic cloves into the cooking liquid. Using 2 forks, shred the chicken, combining it with the garlic and cooking liquid.
- If desired, season with salt and use right away. To make the barbecue chicken, add the
 drained, shredded chicken to a large bowl along with the barbecue sauce to taste. Toss
 until the chicken is coated.
- 8. Serve the pulled chicken on buns with a quick slaw for the perfect weeknight dinner or potluck sandwich.
- 9. Store any leftover chicken covered and refrigerated with some of the cooking broth to keep it moist.

Tips

- Four boneless breasts typically equal two pounds of chicken. If you have especially big chicken breasts, you'll need to cook them for longer. Start with 7 minutes.
- After pressure cooking, make sure your chicken is cooked through and registers at least 165 F on a digital thermometer. If they aren't quite done, secure the lid and cook for an additional 2 minutes at high pressure.
- We don't recommend trying this recipe with frozen chicken breasts, since the outside will dry out before the interior is cooked. Thaw frozen breasts before cooking.

How to Use Instant Pot Pulled Chicken

Pulled chicken can be used for anything from salad to soup to sandwiches. Adding sauce makes the chicken extra moist, and there are a number of options beyond barbecue sauce:

- Tex-Mex: Instead of barbecue sauce, add 1 to 2 tablespoons of taco seasoning and up to 1/4 cup of the cooking broth and toss to coat. If desired, add up to a cup of salsa. Use to fill tacos and burritos, top nachos, and more.
- Mole: Toss the pulled chicken with mole sauce and use it to make tacos or cemitas.
- Pesto: Toss the chicken with pesto and, as needed, a little of the cooking broth to moisten. Use in sandwiches, wraps, and salads.
- Teriyaki: Toss the chicken with teriyaki sauce and use to make a salad or wrap.

Recipe Variation

 For extra moist pulled chicken, swap the chicken breasts for boneless, skinless chicken thighs. Cook at high pressure for 5 minutes as directed but use full a natural release.
 Check for doneness—the thighs should be tender and cooked through and register 165
 F on a digital thermometer.

How to Store and Freeze

- Store Instant Pot pulled chicken refrigerated in an airtight container with some of the cooking broth or tossed in barbecue sauce to help keep it moist. It will keep for three days.
- Reheat pulled chicken uncovered in the microwave in short bursts, stirring often, or in a skillet on the stovetop. You may want to add some broth to keep it moist.
- You can freeze drained, cooled pulled chicken in an airtight container for up to a month. Defrost in the fridge before reheating.