



Cook's Illustrated Spice-Rubbed Picnic Chicken

Serves 8

From CI: If you plan to serve the chicken later on the same day that you cook it, refrigerate it immediately after it has cooled, then let it come back to room temperature before serving. On the breast pieces, we use toothpicks to secure the skin, which otherwise shrinks considerably in the oven, leaving the meat exposed and prone to drying out. We think the extra effort is justified, but you can omit this step. This recipe halves easily.

- 5 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken pieces (breasts, thighs, drumsticks, or a mix with breasts cut into 3 pieces or halved if small), trimmed of excess fat and skin
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 2 tablespoons sweet paprika
- 2 teaspoons ground black pepper
- 1/4-1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper (instead of cayenne, I used chinese five spice powder)

Use sharp knife to make 2 or 3 short slashes in skin of each piece of chicken, being careful not to cut into meat. Combine salt, sugar, and spices in small bowl. Coat chicken pieces with spices, including under the skin. Transfer chicken skin side up to wire rack set over rimmed foil-lined baking sheet, lightly tent with foil, and refrigerate 6 to 24 hours.

Secure skin of each breast piece with 2 or 3 toothpicks placed near edges of skin.

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 425 degrees. Roast chicken until thickest part of smallest piece registers 140 degrees on instant-read thermometer, 15 to 20 minutes. Increase oven temperature to 500 degrees and continue roasting until chicken is browned and crisp and thickest parts of breast pieces register 160 degrees, 5 to 8 minutes longer, removing pieces from oven as they finish cooking. Continue to roast thighs and/or drumsticks, if using, until thickest part of meat registers 170 to 175 degrees, about 5 minutes longer. Remove from oven and let cool completely before refrigerating or serving.