

Roast Chicken Stuffed Under the Skin

There are many things traditionally prescribed in cooking that, to me, make little sense. That goes for stuffing a chicken in its cavity, where the flavour of the stuffing mixture has little chance of permeating the meat, rather than under the skin. Stellar California chef Wolfgang Puck showed me his way of doing the latter – specifically, inserting an aromatic mixture of minced garlic and fresh herbs between the bird's flesh and skin - on a rare visit to Toronto in the mid 1980s. Like many chefs, he also recommended butterflying the bird before roasting. I usually pay the extra for an organic chicken to ensure great taste and less hazards to health.

3 to 4-lb (1.5 to 2 kg) chicken
¼ cup soft goat cheese or boursin
¼ cup fresh herbs (rosemary, thyme, sage or a combo), chopped
2 large garlic cloves, minced
½ cup tsp each: salt and freshly ground pepper
Juice of half a lemon
⅓ cup chicken stock
⅓ cup dry white wine
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 400° F.

To butterfly chicken, slice through bones along each side of backbone using sharp chef's knife or poultry shears; remove backbone and reserve for other use. Press on chicken so it lies flat.

In bowl, combine cheese, herbs and garlic. Stuff chicken with mixture under its skin, dividing it between breast and thigh areas.

Place chicken, breast side up, in wide roasting pan or earthenware baking dish. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Roast in oven 40 min. Pour stock and white wine around chicken. Roast about 10 min. more or until juices run clear when pierced with fork. Transfer to warmed platter.

For sauce, scrape up browned bits from bottom of pan; skim off fat and add salt and pepper.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.