



Chicken in a Pot with Lemon Orzo (or wild mushrooms)

Your chicken may weigh more or less: the ones I get tend to be around 3½ pounds. And although I have specified the Dutch oven I always use, you obviously will use the one you have, which will make a difference to how quickly everything cooks, how much evaporation there will be, and so on. It doesn't rely on precision timing: the chicken, leeks, and carrots are meant to be soft, and I even like it when the orzo is cooked

Ingredients

- 1 whole chicken (approx. 3½ pounds)
- 3 fat cloves of garlic
- 2 medium carrots (approx. 10 ounces) 2 medium leeks (approx. 5 cups sliced, white parts only)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 lemons
- 2 teaspoons dried tarragon (or dried thyme)
- 2 teaspoons flaky sea salt or kosher salt (or 1 teaspoon fine sea salt)
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 6 cups cold water
- 1 ½ cups orzo pasta
- .3333 cup finely chopped Italian parsley, plus more to serve
- Freshly grated Parmesan, to serve

Directions

1. Untruss the chicken, if it comes trussed, and remove all the string. If time allows, let it stand out on a board for 40 minutes or so to let the chill come off it. Heat the oven to 350°F.
2. Peel the garlic cloves, and peel and cut the carrots into three lengths across, and then into sticks. Wash the leeks to remove any mud and cut into 1-inch rounds.
3. Heat the oil in a large heavy-based Dutch oven with a tightly fitting lid; I use an enameled cast-iron oval Dutch oven 12 inches long, in which the chicken fits neatly, leaving just a small space all around it to fit the vegetables later. Place the chicken in the hot oil breast-side down to color the skin; I do this over high heat for 3–5 minutes, or until the skin is richly golden. Then turn the chicken the right way up.
4. Take the pan off the heat and, aiming for the space around the chicken, finely grate in the zest from the 2 lemons, then grate or mince in the garlic (obviously some can end up on the chicken itself), add the dried tarragon (or thyme) and give a quick stir into the oil as best you can.
5. Scatter the vegetables around the chicken, followed by the salt and red pepper flakes, squeeze in the juice from your zested lemons.
6. Pour in the cold water—covering all but the very top of the breast—and put back on high heat, then bring the pot to a boil. Once it's bubbling, clamp on the lid and carefully transfer to the oven to cook for 1¼ hours, though check to make sure the chicken is all but cooked through and the carrots soft.
7. Take the pot out of the oven, and add the orzo all around the chicken, and push it under the liquid, giving something as approximating a stir as you can manage in the restricted space. Put the lid back on, and return the pot to the oven for another 15 minutes, by which time the orzo should be soft and swollen.
8. Let the Dutch oven stand, uncovered, out of the oven for 15 minutes before serving. The orzo will continue to soak up the broth as it stands.
9. chop the parsley. Stir in ¼ cup, and then sprinkle over a little more. You could shred the chicken now
10. Place a dish by the Dutch oven, and then pull the chicken gently apart with a couple of forks, removing any bones and skin that come loose to the dish. I find it easiest to do this while the chicken's still in the pot but, go carefully as it's likely to fall to pieces a bit as you do so. Stir the chicken and orzo again and ladle into bowls, sprinkling with parsley as you go. You may also want to offer Parmesan to grate over:

*Mat has created this recipe with wild mushrooms, substituting out lemon & no carrots but also changing the orzo for baby shells. This I would call a signature dish. So great during mushroom season with the flavors of mushroom paired with Pinot!