
RECIPE

ROAST CHICKEN WITH ROOT VEGETABLES AND CITRUS



We have a very good chef friend from New Zealand, Bob Knuckey, who helped prepare many of the dishes photographed for this collection of recipes, but this Sunday lunch pièce de la resistance is his wife Sue's dish. It is brilliant with the rich complex flavour of Lycaon Chenin Blanc or the Black Pack Chenin Blanc.

110g/4oz good butter, at room temperature
1.8 kg/4lb free-range chicken, removed from the fridge at least an hour before cooking
Salt and pepper
2 lemons - cut one in half and the other into 1cm slices
1 orange - as above
1 medium-sized butternut, wash, cut into pieces matching the thickness of the sweet potato. Leave the skin on but discard the seeds
2 red onions - cut into 6ths
6 whole carrots - peeled and cut in half
2 small sweet potatoes cut about 2cms thick
1 to 2 celery stalks
Dried or fresh rosemary
Several sprigs of thyme or tarragon, or a mixture of the two
6-8 whole garlic cloves, peeled with the green centres removed
300ml chicken stock or water

Preheat the oven to 450°F/230°C/Gas Mark 8. Smear the butter all over the bird. Put the chicken in a roasting tin that will accommodate it with room to spare. Season liberally and squeeze over the juice of the lemon and half an orange. Sprinkle with rosemary. Put the other herbs and garlic inside the cavity, together with the squeezed out lemon and orange halves — this will add a fragrant citrus flavour.

Add the vegetables to the roasting pan, add the water or stock, add the remaining lemons and oranges and season.

Roast the chicken for 10-15 minutes. Baste, then turn the oven temperature down to 375°F/190°C/Gas Mark 5 and roast for a further 30-45 minutes with further occasional basting. The bird should be golden brown all over with a crisp skin, lovely roast vegetables and buttery citrus flavoured juices of a nut-brown colour in the bottom of the tin.

Turn off the oven, open the door, and leave the chicken to rest for at least 15 minutes. This enables the flesh to relax gently, retaining the juices and ensuring easy, trouble-free carving.

Don't worry about thickening the gravy. With this roasting method, what you end up with in the tin is an amalgamation of butter, the flavour of the vegetables, lemon and orange juice and chicken juices. All it needs is a light whisk or a stir, and you have the most wonderful 'gravy' imaginable. To add extra flavour, you can scoop the garlic and herbs out of the chicken cavity, stir them into the gravy, heat through and strain.

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