



PHOTO CREDIT: CARL TREMBLAY

## French Chicken in a Pot

**WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:** The basic method for *poulet en cocotte*, or French chicken in a pot, is simple: place a seasoned chicken in a pot, scatter in some vegetables, cover, and bake. When done right, this dish forgoes crisp skin for unbelievably tender, succulent meat and rich, concentrated flavor. The key is a dry cooking environment; unlike braising, little to no liquid is added. Our main challenge was to prevent the humidity in the pot from diluting the flavor of the meat as it cooked. By removing the chunks of vegetables we had been adding—the liquid they released made the pot too steamy—and cooking the chicken by itself in a tightly sealed pot, we got the rich, concentrated flavor we sought. Cooking the bird at a low 250 degrees ensured the breast meat didn't dry out. Finally, we found that we could add a small amount of potently flavored aromatics if they were lightly browned with the chicken to remove most of their moisture.

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#### Serves 4

You will need at least a 6-quart Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid for this recipe. If you choose not to serve the skin with the chicken, simply remove it before carving. The amount of jus will vary depending on the size of the chicken; season it with about  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon lemon juice for every  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup.

- 1 (4½- to 5-pound) whole chicken, giblets discarded
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 small celery rib, chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, peeled
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary (optional)
- ½-1 teaspoon lemon juice

**1.** Adjust oven rack to lowest position and heat oven to 250 degrees. Pat chicken dry with paper towels, tuck wings behind back, and season with salt and pepper. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until just smoking. Add chicken breast side down; scatter onion, celery, garlic, bay leaf, and rosemary sprig, if using, around chicken. Cook until breast is lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Using wooden spoon inserted into cavity of bird, flip chicken breast side up and cook until chicken and vegetables are well browned, 6 to 8 minutes.

**2.** Off heat, place large sheet of aluminum foil over pot and cover tightly with lid. Transfer pot to oven and cook chicken until breast registers 160 degrees and thighs register 175 degrees, 1 hour 20 minutes to 1 hour 50 minutes.

**3.** Transfer chicken to carving board, tent with foil, and let rest for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, strain chicken juice from pot through fine-mesh strainer into fat separator, pressing on solids to extract liquid; discard solids. Let juice settle for 5 minutes, then pour into saucepan and set over low heat. Carve chicken, adding any accumulated juice to saucepan. Season sauce with lemon juice, salt, and pepper to taste. Serve chicken, passing sauce separately.