

From Marie – July 2013 W3 (July 21)

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## Roast Chicken with Lemons

From: [Essentials of Classic Italian Cooking, by Marcella Hazan](#)

*If this were a still life its title could be "Chicken with Two Lemons." That is all that there is in it. No fat to cook with, no basting to do, no stuffing to prepare, no condiments except for salt and pepper. After you put the chicken in the oven you turn it just once. The bird, its two lemons, and the oven do all the rest. Again and again, through the years, I meet people who come up to me to say, "I have made your chicken with two lemons and it is the most amazingly simple recipe, the juiciest, best-tasting chicken I have ever had." And you know, it is perfectly true.*

- One 3 to 4 pound chicken
  - Salt
  - Black pepper, ground fresh from the mill
  - 2 rather small lemons.
1. Preheat oven to 350.
  2. Wash the chicken thoroughly in cold water, both inside and out. Remove all the bits of fat hanging loose. Let the bird sit for about 10 minutes on a slightly tilted plate to let all the water drain out of it. Pat it thoroughly dry all over with cloth or paper towels.
  3. Sprinkle a generous amount of salt and black pepper on the chicken, rubbing it with your fingers over all its body and into its cavity.
  4. Wash the lemons in cold water and dry them with a towel. Soften each lemon by placing it on a counter and rolling it back and forth as you put firm downward pressure on it with the palm of your hand. Puncture the lemons in at least 20 places each, using a sturdy round toothpick, a trussing needle, a sharp-pointed fork or similar implement.
  5. Place both lemons in the bird's cavity. Close up the opening with toothpicks or with trussing needle and string. Close it well, but don't make an absolutely airtight job of it because the chicken may burst. Run kitchen string from one leg to the other, tying it at both knuckle ends. Leave the legs in their natural position without pulling them tight. If the skin is unbroken, the chicken will puff up as it cooks, and the string serves only to keep the thighs from spreading apart and splitting the skin.
  6. Put the chicken into a roasting pan, breast facing down. Do not add cooking fat of any kind. This bird is self-basting, so you need not fear it will stick to the pan. Place it in the upper third of the preheated oven. After 30 minutes, turn the chicken over to have the breast face up. When turning it, try not to puncture the skin. If kept intact, the chicken will swell like a balloon, which makes for an arresting presentation at the table later. Do not worry too much about it, however, because even if it fails to swell, the flavor will not be affected.
  7. Cook for another 30 to 35 minutes, and then turn the oven thermostat up to 400, and cook for an additional 20 minutes. Calculate between 20 and 25 minutes total cooking time for each pound. There is no need to turn the chicken again.
  8. Whether your bird has puffed up or not, bring it to the table whole and leave the lemons inside until it is carved and opened. The juices that run out are perfectly delicious. Be sure to spoon them over the chicken slices. The lemons will have shriveled up, but they still contain some juice. Do not squeeze them, they may squirt.

**Ahead-of-time note:** If you want to eat it while it is warm, plan to have it the moment it comes out of the oven. If there are leftovers, they will be very tasty cold, kept moist with some of the cooking juices and eaten not straight out of the refrigerator, but at room temperature.