



Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Buttermilk Brined Roast Chicken

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Tips and Extras

- Smaller chickens? Translation: you're buying bones with a side of meat. Grab the biggest bird you can and get more bang for your buck (and fewer bones to gnaw on like a raccoon in a dumpster).
- Not in the mood to roast? Fine, let the rotisserie at the store do the work. It's not cheating—it's outsourcing.
- Shove some herbs, celery, onions, carrots, or even fruit into that chicken cavity. It's like stuffing a piñata, only this one drips flavor instead of candy.
- PSA: put your brining bag in a bowl in the fridge. If it leaks, you'll have chicken juice marinating your yogurt. No one wants Salmonella Parfait.
- Don't get clever with reusing buttermilk after brining. That's not "resourceful," that's "do you want food poisoning? Because that's how you get food poisoning."
- DIY buttermilk (lemon juice + milk) is cute for pancakes, but in this brine it's about as effective as spray-tanning a rotisserie chicken and calling it roasted. Get the real deal.
- Pour a little water under the rack in your roasting pan. It keeps the drippings from burning, so you'll get sauce-worthy flavor instead of a pan that smells like hell's ashtray.
- If your oven is small (or your bird is a Thanksgiving turkey cosplaying as a "chicken"), move the rack down so the chicken sits in the center of the oven. Nobody wants half-roasted, half-charred poultry.
- Chicken is safe at 165°F, but here's a chef-y trick: pull it at 160°F in the thigh. Residual heat does the rest. Science cooks dinner, you just take the credit.
- When you're done feasting, don't toss the carcass. That pile of bones is liquid gold waiting to become broth. Or, if you're Southern, "next week's soup base."

Storage

Store

Chicken keeps for up to four days, as long as it's refrigerated. Store leftover chicken (cooled to room temperature, first) in an airtight container or cover tightly with aluminum foil. Or, freeze for up to 4 months.

Reheat

Warm up your buttermilk-brined roast chicken in an oven, covered with a sheet of foil. Alternatively, pop it into the microwave, heating it just until it's hot—any longer and you risk drying out the meat.

Variations

- If you don't want to cook a whole bird, use this same recipe for chicken breasts, legs, or wings. Brine for 45 minutes. Then, watch the cooking closely and check with an instant read thermometer, since individual cuts will cook more quickly than the whole chicken.
- You can use olive oil instead of butter (for the rub) if you need to.
- I prefer thyme sprigs, but you can use other herbs depending on the flavors in your dinner. Rosemary, sage, and/or parsley are also good.
- You can use garlic powder instead of fresh minced garlic if you prefer a milder flavor or don't have any cloves.
- If you're familiar with outdoor cooking, you can roast the chicken on a charcoal grill or smoke it in a smoker.

FAQs

Can you freeze roast chicken?

Absolutely! Roast chicken can last for up to four months in the freezer as long as it's sealed well. Remove from the carcass the part of the chicken you wish to freeze and store it in plastic freezer bags. Thaw in the fridge before enjoying as you please!

What's the difference between buttermilk chicken marinade and brine?

When people refer to marinade, they're mostly trying to impart flavor to their meat. A brine, on the other hand, tenderizes the meat, too. So, technically, we're working with a buttermilk brine, not a buttermilk marinade in this recipe.

Um, something is in the cavity of my chicken... help!

If it's your first time working with a whole bird, you'll get a little surprise. Like a Thanksgiving dinner turkey, whole chickens sometimes have the giblets inside the cavity in a small pouch. Remove it and do with it what you please—or toss 'em in the trash.

What do I use if I don't have a roasting pan?

You can use a cast iron pan or a baking sheet and any oven-safe metal rack. If you don't have a rack, that's fine, but the bottom of the chicken will cook in the juices so it won't be as crisp.