



Cast Iron Chicken Thighs with Orzo*

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

- 6 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (about 2 pounds total), patted dry
- ½ tsp sea salt (fine)
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon salted butter or oil
- 1 fennel bulb, chopped, (reserve and chop the fronds to sprinkle on top of the finished dish)
- 1 leek, white and pale green parts only, chopped
- 8 ounces uncooked orzo pasta
- ⅓ cup dry white wine or vermouth (or rum!)
- 2 ½ cups chicken broth (I cheated and used Better Than Bouillion)
- Juice of one lime
- Grated lime zest from a whole lime
- 1 Tbsp butter if desired after the chicken is cooked

Instructions

Preheat oven to 400°.

Press salt and pepper onto the skin side of the chicken thighs.

Heat 1 tablespoon of butter (or olive oil if you prefer in a preheated (medium-high) cast iron skillet. Nestle chicken, skin side down, in skillet in a single layer with no gaps. Cook until the meat is opaque around the edges and skin is deep golden brown, 6–8 minutes. Turn chicken skin side up and transfer the cast iron skillet to the preheated oven; bake, uncovered, until chicken is cooked through, (~15 minutes). Transfer chicken to a plate.

Set the same skillet over medium heat; combine chopped fennel bulb and sliced leek in skillet and sprinkle in some salt and pepper. Cook, tossing occasionally until the leek is looking golden around the edges, about 5 minutes. Be careful of the very hot panhandle!

Add orzo and cook until pasta is darkened (it will take on a brown hue) to a nice nutty brown in spots and toasty smelling, about 3 minutes. Pour in wine (or rum!) and cook, stirring, until liquid is evaporated, about 1 minute. Add broth ½ cup at a time, stirring constantly and letting broth

absorb before adding more until orzo is tender and broth is mostly absorbed but the pan is not dry, 10–15 minutes. You might not need all the broth.

Remove skillet from heat, taste and add more salt and pepper to your liking; mix in lemon juice and remaining 1 Tbsp. butter, then chopped fennel fronds. Pile chicken on top and finish with lemon zest. I pick something colorful to garnish this dish since it is pretty brown!

*Recipe adapted from Epicurious