

Mediterranean Roasted Chicken

Submitted by: Betty Nicoson



4 Servings

- 1 **Pilgrim's Pride** whole chicken, about 4 to 5 pounds, giblets removed

Spinach Filling:

- 8 ounces fresh spinach, washed, large stems removed
 1 cup Ricotta cheese
 1 egg
 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
 1/2 cup (2 ounces) shredded Mozzarella cheese
 4 cloves garlic, sliced
 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
 1 teaspoon each salt and pepper
 1/2 cup sliced roasted almonds
 1/2 cup chopped water chestnuts

Topping:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
 1 teaspoon coarse salt

Place whole chicken on cutting board, breast side down. With meat shears or sharp knife, split chicken from tail to neck along one side of backbone. Repeat cutting along other side of backbone to completely remove. Discard backbone. Turn chicken breast side up and press down with palms of hands, popping bones to flatten chicken (see note). Wing tips may be tucked under chicken or left upright. With fingers, and if necessary using a small sharp knife, gently loosen skin on breast area of chicken, without tearing, to form pockets between skin and meat. Do not loosen skin on wings and legs. Set aside.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cook spinach in small amount of water until done, about 8 minutes. Cool slightly and squeeze with hands to remove as much water as possible. Place in blender or food processor and finely chop. Set aside. Combine Ricotta, egg, cheeses, garlic, vinegar, salt and pepper. Stir in spinach, almonds and water chestnuts. Gently stuff spinach mixture in pockets under loosened skin. Press down to evenly distribute.

Place rack in shallow baking pan and spray with cooking spray. Place chicken on rack, breast side up and brush with oil. Combine herbs and salt and sprinkle over chicken. Bake in preheated oven 1 to 1 1/2 hours until skin is browned and crispy. Chicken is done when temperature on meat thermometer reaches 180°F and juices run clear when pierced with knife.

To serve, cut chicken lengthwise and crosswise into quarters.

Note: This technique of preparing chicken is termed "spatchcocking" and is particularly suitable for grilling or broiling chicken.

