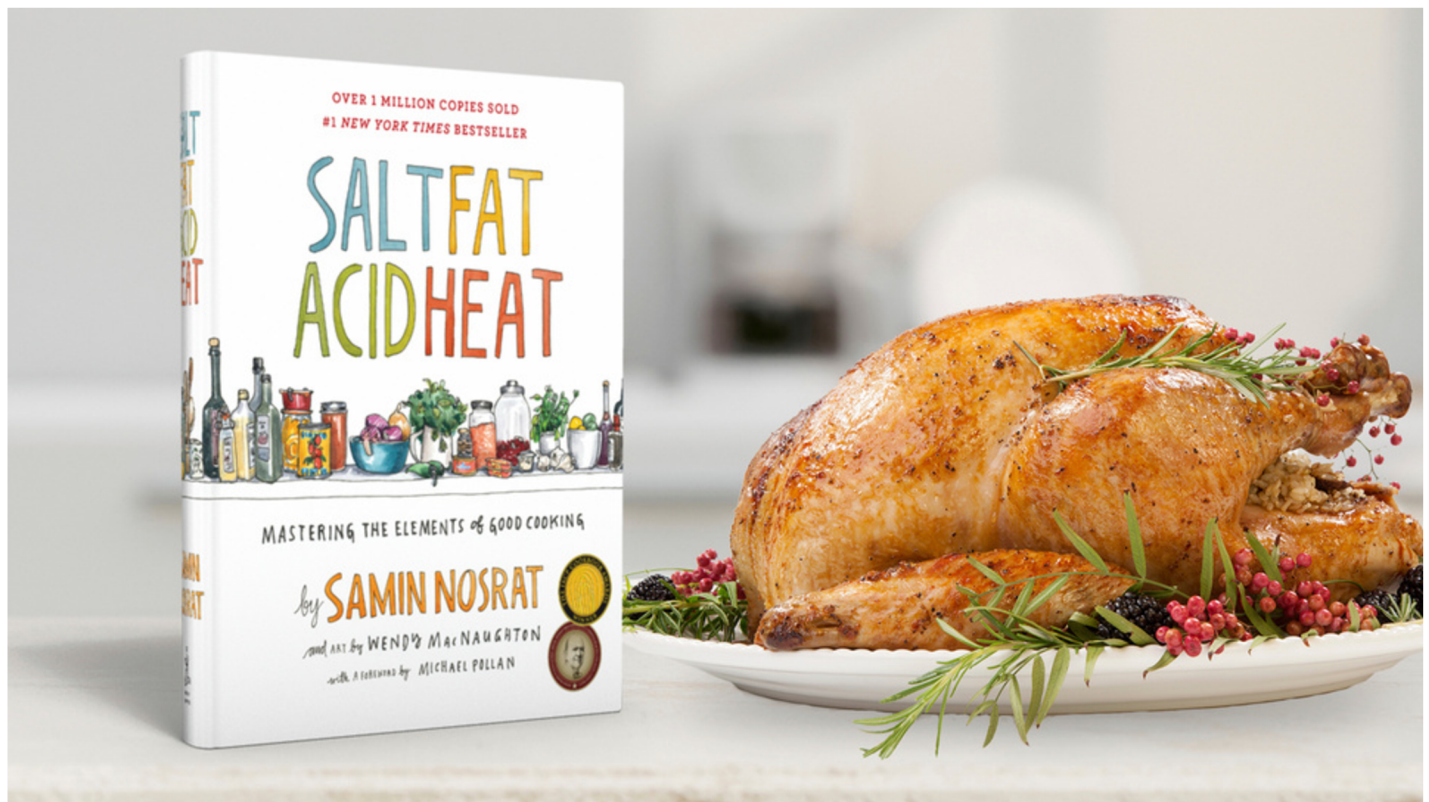




Crispiest Spatchcocked Chicken

Serves 4

Two tricks make this simple recipe the most extraordinary way I know to cook a whole chicken. First, spatchcocking. Spatchcocking is the term for removing a bird's back-bone and then splaying it so it lies flat, but I like to think of it as a way to increase surface area for browning while decreasing cooking time. (It's also my favorite way to cook Thanksgiving turkey, cutting down cooking time by nearly half!)

The second trick is one I stumbled on by mistake at Eccolo, when one of my cooks seasoned a few chickens and left them uncovered in the walk-in overnight. When I came in the next day, I was annoyed by his negligence. The constantly circulating air of the walk-in—like that of any refrigerator—had dried out the chicken skin, and the birds looked scarily fossilized. But I had no choice, so I cooked them anyway. The dried-out skin cooked up golden and glassy. It was the crispiest roast chicken skin I'd ever seen, even after the bird had rested.

If you don't have a chance to season the chicken and let its skin dry out overnight, season it as early as possible, then pat it dry with a paper towel before you begin to cook it. It'll help achieve a similar effect.

4-pound whole chicken

Salt

Extra-virgin olive oil

The day before you plan to cook the chicken, spatchcock it (or ask your butcher to help!). Use heavy-duty kitchen shears to snip down along both sides of the spine (the underside of the bird) and remove it. You can start from the tail or neck end, whichever you prefer. Once you've removed the spine, reserve it for stock. Remove the wingtips and reserve them for stock, too.

Lay the chicken on the cutting board, breast side up. Push down on the breastbone until you hear the cartilage pop and the bird lies flat. Generously season the bird with salt on both sides. Place it breast side up into a shallow roasting dish and refrigerate, uncovered, overnight.

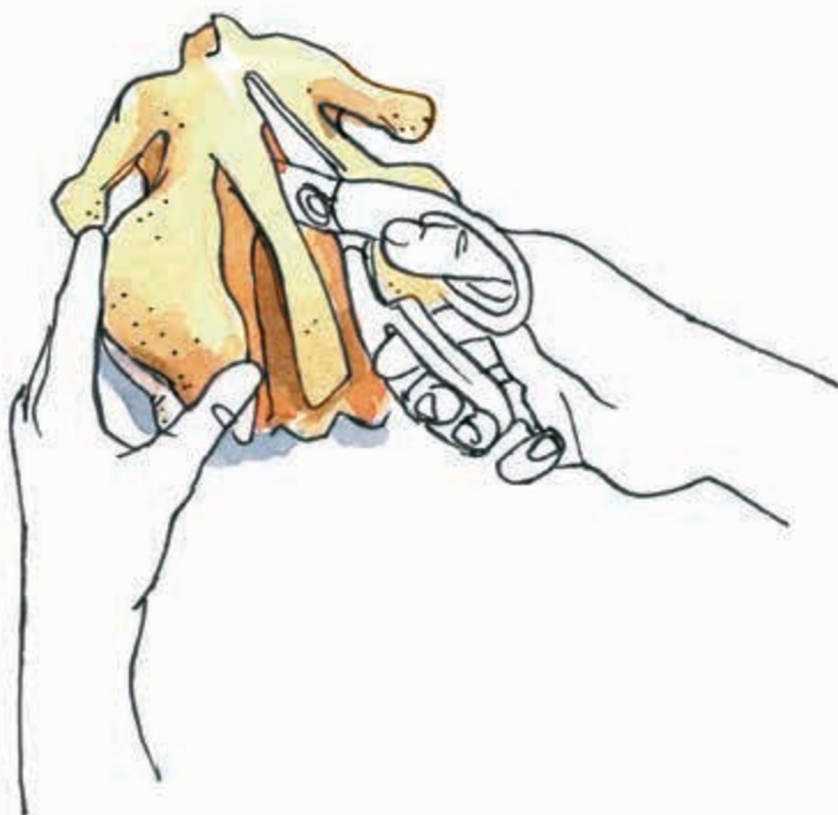
Pull the bird out of the fridge an hour before you plan to cook it. Preheat the oven to 425°F, with a rack positioned in the upper third of the oven.

Heat a 10- or 12-inch cast iron pan or other skillet over medium-high heat. Add just enough olive oil to coat the bottom of the pan. As soon as the oil shimmers, place the chicken in the pan, breast side down, and brown for 6 to 8 minutes, until golden. It's fine if the bird doesn't lie completely flat as long as the breast is in contact with the pan. Flip the bird over (again, it's fine if it doesn't lie entirely flat) and slide the entire cast iron pan into the oven on the prepared rack. Push the pan all the way to the very back of the oven, with the handle of the pan facing left.

After about 20 minutes, carefully use an oven mitt to rotate the pan 180 degrees so the handle faces right and return it to the very back of the top rack.

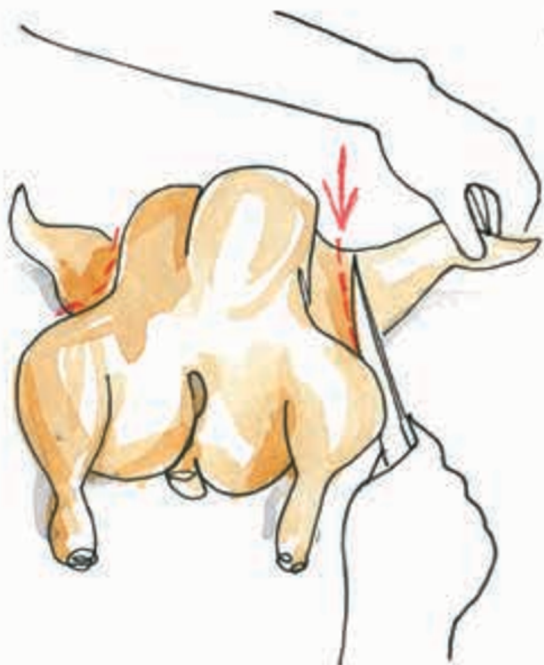
Cook until the chicken is brown all over and the juices run clear when you cut between the leg and the thigh, about 45 minutes.

Let rest 10 minutes before carving. Serve warm or at room temperature.



HOW to BREAK DOWN ^{DARN} A WHOLE CHICKEN

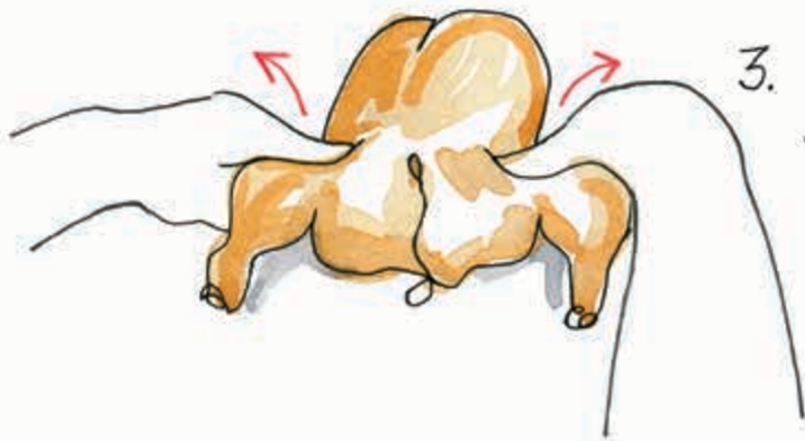
in A FEW SIMPLE STEPS



1. FIRST, CUT OFF BOTH WINGS and SET THEM ASIDE for STOCK.



2. NEXT, SLICE THE SKIN BETWEEN THE LEG and THE BREAST on BOTH SIDES.

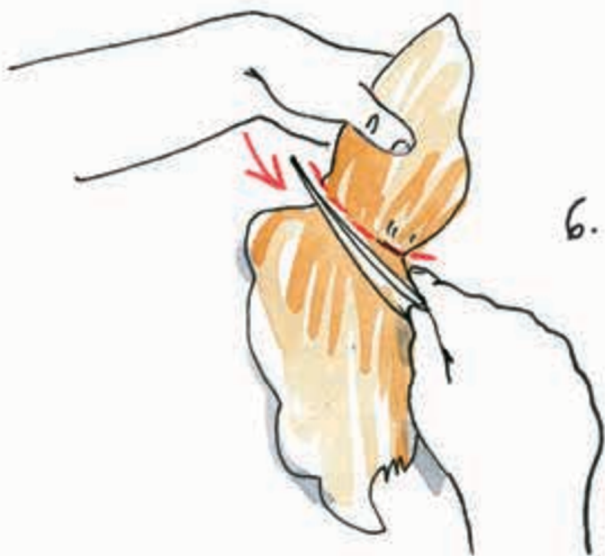
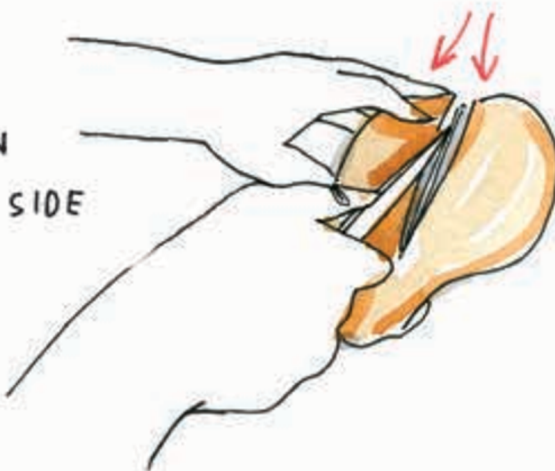


3. THEN, STICK YOUR THUMBS in THE CUTS. GRAB THE BACK of THE LEGS and TURN YOUR HANDS OUTWARD, DISLOCATING THE LEGS from THE BODY.



4. NEXT, FLIP THE BIRD OVER ~~and~~ CUT THROUGH THE JOINT ~~to~~ REMOVE THE RIGHT LEG. REPEAT ON OTHER SIDE.

5. TURN CHICKEN OVER AGAIN ~~and~~ SLICE ALONG EITHER SIDE OF THE BREASTBONE.



6. SLIDE YOUR KNIFE DOWN ~~and~~ ALONG THE RIB CAGE, THEN CUT THROUGH THE WING JOINT ~~to~~ REMOVE EACH BREAST.

7. THIS LEAVES you with TWO BREASTS ~~and~~ TWO LEGS. CUT EACH OF THOSE in HALF, ALONG THE LINES ~~to~~ THE RIGHT.

1 CHICKEN = 8 PIECES

