

Chicken Chilindrón

We do a few road trips during the year and stay with relatives and friends. I wanted a quick and simple dish that I could make at someone else's home with standard kitchen tools and ingredients you can find anywhere but that had huge flavor and reflected my Basque heritage. Chicken Chilindrón (pronounced chill-in-DRONE) is it. The only things I need to carry with me are a tiny bottle of sweet Spanish paprika and a packet of Jamón (pronounced ham-OWN, which is thin sliced dry cured ham from Spain). *Mise en place* is pretty simple and only takes a few minutes. It takes about an hour to cook, but the last half hour is simmering, and you only need to check it a couple of times. Chicken Chilindrón pairs great with **Jenner Family Estates Basque Brothers red wine blend**. You can use this red wine blend to cook the chicken, though sherry is more traditional and gives a smoother flavor.



Ingredients

- 2 pounds chicken thighs
- 1-1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 3 TBS Wondra flour
- 4 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion cut small dice
- 1 red bell pepper, cored and cut into thin strips
- 4 cloves of garlic, cut fine brunoise
- 3 ounces Jamón or Serrano ham, diced into 1/2 inch pieces
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon sweet Spanish paprika
- 1/2 cup Jenner Family Estates Basque Brothers red wine blend or sherry.
- 1 14 ounce can diced tomatoes (no salt added preferred)

Instructions

Lay the chicken pieces on a dinner plate or pan and season both sides with salt and pepper. Heat a 4-quart sauteuse pan to medium heat. Coat the pan with olive oil. Pour a layer of flour in another dinner plate or pan. Dip each piece of chicken in the flour and coat both sides with a very thin layer of flour (pat off any excess flour). Slowly lay the chicken pieces in the pan. Leave space between the chicken pieces. You may need to brown the chicken in two batches. Saute the chicken just until it is



browned (no raw meat showing; about 2 minutes on each side). Set the chicken aside on a plate and cover to keep warm. Keep the bits of brown "crud" in the pan (the "fond"). Coat the pan with more olive oil and add the bell peppers and onions. Add 1 tsp salt and stir. Sauté for about 8 to 10 minutes until the vegetables soften and start to caramelize. Make some room in the pan and add a few drops of olive oil. Add the garlic to the olive oil in the pan and saute until fragrant (about 30 seconds) then stir the garlic into the vegetable mix.

Add the ham, stir, and saute for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the bay leaf and sweet paprika. Stir and saute for about 2 to 3 minutes. Add the wine or sherry to deglaze the pan. Saute another 2 to 3 minutes while scraping all the fond off the bottom of the pan. Stir in the tomatoes. Nestle the chicken pieces in the pan and reduce the heat to between medium and low. Coat the tops of the chicken pieces with sauce. Simmer uncovered for 30 minutes, occasionally coating the tops of the chicken with the sauce. Taste the sauce and add salt, about ¼ tsp at a time, if needed.

Serving

Put one or two chicken thighs on each plate and cover with the tomato/pepper mix. You can serve this with Easy Rice Pilaf-Mexican Style from my *Lodi Wine and Food* book (page 204) or use an off-the-shelf Spanish rice mix. I served it with Manchego mashed potatoes (see Tips and Tricks below)

Tips and Tricks

I keep a few 3-ounce packages of sliced Monte Nevado Serrano Ham in the refrigerator for making this dish and to use as an appetizer when tasting wines made from Spanish varietals. You can buy a set of four packs on Amazon.com for about \$40. The ham is dry cured, and each pack is vacuum sealed so you can carry it with you for a few days without refrigerating it.

To get the true aroma and flavor for this dish, you will need Spanish smoked sweet paprika (pimentón). El Angel brand is available on Amazon.com for about \$7.

If you have more than four guests and want to stretch the chicken to one thigh per person, a nice, filling side dish is Manchego mashed potatoes. Manchego is cheese made from sheep's milk, which is a staple in Basque country. Wash 2 pounds of gold potatoes and cut each of them in half (leaving the skins on). Boil the potatoes for about 15 to 20 minutes until you can easily push a fork through and cut a piece in half with the fork. Drain the water but save about 1 cup. Put 2 tablespoons of potato water back into the pot. Melt 3 ounces of Plugra European style salted butter in the pot next to the potatoes. Mash the potatoes and butter to get a smooth texture with some chunks. Add 1 teaspoon of salt and about a quarter cup of half-and-half until you get a creamy but not watery consistency. Add 6 ounces of shredded Manchego cheese and stir until it melts into the mix. If the mix is too thick, add potato water, a tablespoon at a time until you get the consistency that you want.