

Lemon and Thyme Grilled Chicken Breasts

By Melissa Clark

Updated June 25, 2025



Con Poulos for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Simon Andrews.

Total Time 30 minutes, plus 1 hour marinating

Rating ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ (2,098)

These classic herb and lemon-seasoned chicken breasts will win over fans, especially when cooked over charcoal to give them the deepest, smokiest taste. For dark meat lovers, this recipe will also work with boneless, skinless thighs, though you might have to add a minute or so to the cooking time. Or use a combination of breasts and thighs and make everyone happy.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

- 4 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped thyme leaves
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed and peeled
- 2 lemons, as needed
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, more as needed
- Torn basil or mint leaves, as needed

PREPARATION

Step 1

Place chicken breasts between two sheets of parchment or plastic wrap. Using a mallet or rolling pin, pound each to an even thickness of ½ inch. Do not make them any thinner or they could dry out.

Step 2

Place chicken in a large bowl and toss with salt, pepper, thyme, garlic and the zest and juice of 1 lemon. Mix in olive oil. Cover and refrigerate 1 to 2 hours. Remove chicken from fridge while you heat the grill.

Step 3

Light the grill, building a hot fire, or heat your gas grill to high. Once grill is fully heated, brush breasts lightly with olive oil and

place chicken on the grill. Cook until undersides are browned and chicken is about halfway cooked, 3 to 5 minutes. Flip breasts and grill until cooked through, 3 to 5 minutes more.

Step 4

Transfer chicken to a platter. Drizzle with oil and garnish with additional lemon juice, olive oil and basil or mint leaves.

Private Notes

Leave a Private Comment on this recipe and see it here.