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Lemon-Thyme Roasted Chicken

Serves 4-6

Bright flavors enhance this deliciously roasted chicken! Lemon lends its magic in two ways – the juice and the flavorful peel. The pairing of fresh thyme with the lemon completes the flavor profile. The chicken stays juicy thanks to the compound butter tucked under the skin of the chicken, and a “turning-while-roasting” routine that promotes even cooking.

- 1 (5-6 pound) whole chicken
- 8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons thyme leaves, stripped from the stem
- 3 lemons, (1 zested, all quartered)
- 1 garlic bulb, cloves peeled
- 2 teaspoons Kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Prepare the chicken for roasting by removing any chicken parts stored in the neck and/or inner cavities. (Do not wash or rinse the chicken – experts say the process of washing the chicken can disperse bacteria around the kitchen; better to handle less and roast the chicken well.) Place the chicken, breast-side up in a heavy roasting pan that’s been generously oiled.
2. In a small bowl, with a sturdy spoon, or by using a hand mixer on low speed, mix the butter, thyme leaves, zest of one lemon, 7 crushed garlic cloves, salt, and pepper.
3. Separate the skin from the chicken in the breast area and the back area. Tuck in half the compound butter in these pockets under the skin. Place 6 of the lemon quarters inside the chicken’s cavity along with the remaining whole garlic cloves. Tie the legs together and tuck the wings under the chicken. Smear the remaining compound butter all over the outside of the chicken. Place the remaining 6 lemon quarters around the chicken in the bottom of the pan.
4. Roast the chicken, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven, and carefully turn the chicken to breast-side down. Roast for another 20 minutes. Again, remove the pan from the oven and turn the chicken breast-side up, and roast for another 20 minutes. Continue roasting until the thickest part of chicken reaches 165°F. Loosely tent the top with aluminum foil if it is browning too quickly.
5. Transfer the roasted chicken to a cutting board for carving, or to a platter if carving at the table.