

mad steward's sheet pan chicken

serves 2 hungry people

This is a tasty dinner that goes from fridge to finished in 45 minutes. To be honest, it's the kind of recipe I'm always looking for, and I stumbled into it sort of by accident. I wanted to recreate pieces of Denethor's chicken meal from *The Return of the King*, without taking the time to actually carefully roast a whole chicken mid-movie marathon. In the movie, he eats the chicken with tomatoes and grapes, and I went through a grape-roasting phase around the holidays in 2022 (great for zhuzhing up a charcuterie board!), so I thought... why not just roast it all together? And it really worked.

The lemon sauce takes cues from the ubiquitous Vietnamese dipping sauce *nước chấm* to add a little extra zing to the dish, but it'd work just fine with just the chicken juices from the pan if you're feeling... unzingy.

ingredients

Sheet pan meal:

- 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
- 2 handfuls red seedless grapes
- 8-10 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 4-5 Tbsp olive oil
- 1-2 tsp dried thyme
- 1-2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- rosemary sprig (*optional*)
- salt & pepper to taste

Lemon sauce:

- 3-4 tsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp seasoned rice vinegar
- 1-2 tsp Fish sauce
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1 red Thai chili pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp capers
- 3 anchovies, chopped (*optional*)

To serve:

- Crusty bread

notes

These measurements are all given in ranges because this is really a recipe for feeling it with your heart. The whole point is that it shouldn't be too fussy. Be generous with salt, pepper, and olive oil on the sheet pan. Adjust the lemon sauce to taste.

preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Season chicken thighs on all sides generously with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and place on a large sheet pan skin-side up. Take extra care to make sure the skin has a nice coating of olive oil for maximum crispiness. Sprinkle with paprika, and top with a rosemary sprig if you happen to have one.
3. Scatter cherry tomatoes around chicken and top with olive oil, salt, pepper, and thyme.
4. Add bunches of red seedless grapes and coat with olive oil, salt, pepper, and balsamic vinegar.
5. Bake altogether in the oven at 400 for 35-45 min (until chicken thighs read 175 F on thermometer inserted at thickest part – 165 is safe but 175 will give you a more tender thigh).
6. While dinner bakes, make your sauce: whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, fish sauce, rice vinegar, garlic powder. Stir in chili, capers, and anchovies.
7. Serve with crusty bread and drizzle the sauce around the chicken and accompaniments, being careful not to get your crispy chicken skin wet.