

Brian's Southern Chicken & Dumplings



★★★★★

Prep Time: 15 mins | **Cook Time:** 45 mins | **Makes:** 8-10 | **Difficulty:** Medium

Ingredients:

- 4 lbs chicken thighs
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 ½ cup chopped leeks, cut into half-moons and thoroughly rinsed (or you can substitute 1 ½ cup diced onion)
- 3 cups large diced carrots
- 1 ½ cups large diced celery
- 1 cup white wine
- 6 cups water
- 2 bay leaves
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme (or 1 tsp dried)
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley

For the dumplings:

- 1 ½ cups all purpose flour
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- ¼ tsp garlic powder
- ¾ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp ground chili pepper or cayenne pepper
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp vodka plus water to make ½ cup total liquid (optional; may substitute ½ cup water)

Directions:

Chop the veggies so they're ready to go when you are.

NOTE: Leeks are tricky: Cut off the greens (you can leave just a tiny bit of very light green), slice

lengthwise and slice into ¼-½ inch half moons. transfer them to a bowl of cold water to rinse them. You may want drain them and repeat just to be sure all the grit is washed away. Rinse your cutting board, too, so that no grit will stick to the carrots and celery when you chop them. Try to get the carrots and celery into similar sized ½ inch diced pieces. I tend toward the chunky, and I think that works best in this recipe with its large chunks of chicken and wide dumplings.

Season the chicken thighs liberally on both sides with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Over medium heat, heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a large covered dutch oven. Working in batches, place the thighs skin side down in the oil. DON'T MOVE THEM FOR 6-7 MINUTES. You want them to get nicely golden brown, and if you try to move them too early, they will stick to the pot! Once Golden Brown & Crispy that has been achieved, remove the thighs to a large plate. NOTE: they will not be done at this point! Continue with the remaining thighs, careful not to crowd the bottom of the pan.

Once all the thighs are on the plate, remove all those Golden Brown & Crispy skins and discard. No, really. throw them away. FOR GOD'S SAKE, DON'T TOSS THEM BACK INTO THE HOT PAN TO FINISH THEIR JOURNEY TO DELICIOUS IRRESISTIBILITY. And DON'T chop the resulting crispy salty skins into strips to sprinkle on your final dish. And PLEASE... pleasepleasepleasedonot just SNACK on these chicken chips while you sip the rest of the white wine and finish making dinner. You have been warned. I wash my hands of the whole mess.

Drain all the rendered chicken fat from the pan (careful to wipe any drips on the outside of the pot - you don't want a grease fire!) Return the pot to medium heat and toss in the chopped vegetables. Stir them around, scraping up the golden bits stuck to the bottom of the pot.

Cook for a couple minutes, then add the wine and finish scraping up the golden bits. Let the wine reduce for about 2 minutes. Add the bay leaves and thyme, 1 tsp kosher salt and ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper.

Lay the chicken on top of the vegetables and add the water. The liquid should almost cover the chicken. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat to a slow simmer. Cover the pot and cook for 20-25 minutes, or until the thighs reach 165 degrees, skimming the foam from the surface 2-3 times during the cooking.

Remove the thighs to a large bowl (do NOT reuse the plate from before because the thighs were still uncooked then). Fish out the bay leaves and thyme stems. Taste the broth and adjust the seasoning. Continue to cook the broth for about 5 minutes, until the celery is tender. Turn off the heat.

Start with your dumplings now. In a bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients. Drizzle in the olive oil and whisk again to distribute evenly. Add the liquid (water/vodka or water) and mix with a fork until all the dry ingredients are incorporated into a nice dough. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and knead or fold 3-4 times. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rest for 5-10 minutes while you deal with defatting the broth.

Using your fat separator, ladle in the fat rich top layer of the broth and allow to settle and separate. Strain the resulting broth back into the pot. You can accomplish the same thing by carefully skimming the fat off the top of the broth with a ⅓ cup measuring cup.

Back to the dumplings! Roll out the dumplings to ¼ inch thickness. Use a paring knife to cut the dumplings into 2 inch wide strips, then cut the strips into dumplings about 6 inches long.

Bring the broth back up to a low boil. Carefully lower the dumplings into the broth one at a time, making sure each one gets fully wet. Lower the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook for 10-12 minutes. Cut off a bit of a dumpling with a spoon and test for doneness. They should be soft and pillowy (you don't want 'al dente' here!)

In the meanwhile, pull the bones out of the thighs and pull the meat into large-but-still-manageable chunks. When the dumplings are done, add the chicken back into the pot. Add the parsley. Gently stir to incorporate the chicken and parsley without destroying the dumplings.

If you heeded my warning, you won't have a garnish of golden delicious salty/peppery crispy chicken

strips to worry about. Good on you. I frequently fail to heed my own advice.

This recipe makes a lot, but it freezes really well and makes a great microwaveable lunch for work the next day. And if you are cooking for yourself (and you should!) you can half the recipe really easily, too.

Source: My Collection