

Chicken Stuffed with Brie, Caramelized Onions & Garlic

By Julie Van Rosendaal

Serves 4

Stuffing chicken breasts isn't difficult if you don't let yourself get intimidated by the process. It requires much less skill than you might expect - stuffed chicken breasts hold their shape even when you expect them not to. They're best stuffed with flavourful ingredients such as cheese, olives, herbs, and intensely flavoured meats - ingredients that are already cooked are your best choices so you don't have to worry about the chicken becoming overcooked and tough by the time the middle is properly cooked through.

Ingredients:

Olive or canola oil, for cooking with
2 onions, cut in half lengthwise and thinly sliced
4 cloves garlic, crushed
1/4 cup (60 mL) white wine or
 1 Tbsp (15 mL) balsamic vinegar (optional)
4 skinless, boneless chicken breasts, trimmed of fat
4 oz (125 g) Brie, sliced or cut into chunks
1/2 cup (125 mL) dry bread crumbs or panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
2 Tbsp (30 mL) grated Parmesan
2 Tbsp (30 mL) chopped fresh parsley (optional)
Salt and pepper
1 egg or 1/4 cup (60 mL) buttermilk

Method:

In a large skillet set over medium heat, heat a drizzle of oil and sauté the onions for about 20 minutes, stirring often, until they turn deep golden. Add the garlic and wine and cook for a few more minutes, until the liquid evaporates. Set the onions aside to cool.

Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C).

Place the chicken on a cutting board, and cut a slit horizontally along one edge of the breast, cutting nearly to the opposite side but not all the way through. Open it so it forms two flaps, attached at the center, like a butterfly. Stuff each breast with about a quarter of the caramelized onions and a quarter of the Brie; close the flap, press it down firmly, and set them aside on a baking sheet. Don't worry that they aren't sealed around the edges.

In a shallow dish, combine the bread crumbs, Parmesan, parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. In another dish, lightly beat the egg with a fork, or pour in the buttermilk.

Holding a chicken breast together, dip it in the beaten egg or buttermilk, coating it on both sides, then in the bread crumb mixture, turning it over to coat it well. Repeat with each chicken breast.

Drizzle a little oil into a large ovenproof skillet set over medium-high heat. Cook the chicken breasts until browned on one side, then turn them over and place the skillet in the oven. If you don't have an ovenproof skillet, brown the chicken breasts on the other side, then transfer them to a baking sheet or dish and put them in the oven.

Bake the chicken for 15-20 minutes, until no longer pink inside. (Poke them with a sharp knife to peek if you can't tell.) Serve immediately.

What to do with the leftovers:

- * Keep them covered in the fridge for 2-3 days, or wrap them well and freeze for up to 3 months. Reheat them in the microwave or covered with foil in the oven.
- * Slice leftover chicken breasts and serve them over hot pasta with marinara sauce and grated Parmesan.

Other stuffings:

- * Stuff the chicken breasts with sliced Black Forest ham and Brie, grated cheddar, or Monterey Jack.
- * Sauté a thinly sliced apple along with the onions for the last 5 minutes of cooking time; stuff the chicken with the apple-onion mixture and some thinly sliced smoked Gouda.
- * Stuff the chicken breasts with chopped canned artichoke hearts, crumbled goat cheese, a sprinkle of chopped fresh thyme, and some grated lemon zest.
- * Sauté a handful of fresh spinach in a little oil until it wilts. Add a few chopped sun-dried tomatoes, a few chopped olives, and some crumbled feta cheese and use the mixture to stuff the chicken breasts.

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by Julie Van Rosendaal
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