

Bright & Cozy Lemon Chicken Orzo Soup: A Comforting Classic

I'm a huge believer in the power of soup to nourish both body and soul, and this



TIME
15 min

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INGREDIENTS

- 4 quarts warm water (for brining)
- ... cup kosher salt (for brining chicken)
- 1 ½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 6 cups chicken broth (low sodium preferred)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh dill
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (for soup, adjust to taste)
- 1 teaspoon fresh black pepper (for soup, adjust to taste)
- ¾ cup dry orzo pasta
- 2 large egg yolks
- Juice of 2 medium lemons (about ... cup)
- Optional - Zest of 1 lemon
- More salt and pepper to taste

Swaps and Notes:

Chicken: Boneless, skinless chicken thighs can be used for an even juicier result. Cooked, shredded rotisserie chicken can also be used; add it back to the pot at the same time as the browned chicken breasts.

Brining Chicken: This step is optional but highly recommended for incredibly juicy and tender

chicken. If you skip it, simply season the chicken generously with salt and pepper before cooking.

Vegetables: Feel free to add other diced vegetables like parsnips or potatoes with the carrots, celery, and onion.

Herbs: Fresh dill is wonderful and adds a distinct flavor. If using dried dill, use about 1-2 teaspoons. Fresh oregano can also be used (about 1 tablespoon, chopped).

Orzo: Other small pasta shapes like ditalini or acini di pepe can be substituted for orzo.

Egg Yolks: Tempering the egg yolks is crucial to prevent them from scrambling in the hot soup. This technique adds richness and a slight thickening. If you prefer, you can omit the egg yolks for a lighter, thinner broth, though it won't have the same velvety texture.

Lemon: Fresh lemon juice and zest are key for that vibrant, bright flavor. Adjust the amount to your taste preference.

Broth: Low sodium chicken broth allows you to control the overall saltiness.

Garnish: A sprinkle of extra fresh dill or parsley for garnish.

Instructions:

Brine the Chicken (Optional but Recommended): See note below. In a large bowl or container, dissolve ... cup of kosher salt in 4 quarts of warm water. Place the boneless, skinless chicken breasts into the salt water. Allow them to brine for 15 minutes at room temperature. If you plan to brine the chicken for longer (up to an hour), you need to place the bowl back in the refrigerator.

Prepare Chicken: Remove the chicken from the brine and pat it completely dry with paper towels. Discard the brine.

Cook Chicken: Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large 7-quart pot or Dutch Oven over medium heat. Add the patted-dry chicken breasts and cook for about 3 minutes on each side until they are golden brown. They don't need to be cooked through at this point. Remove the chicken from the pot and set it aside on a plate.

SautØ Vegetables: In the same pot (don't clean it!), add the diced carrots, celery, and medium yellow onion. Cook for 5 - 7 minutes over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are softened. Add in the minced garlic and cook for an additional minute until fragrant.

Make the Soup Base: Return the golden-brown chicken breasts back to the pot with the sautØed vegetables. Add 6 cups of chicken broth, 2 tablespoons of finely chopped fresh dill, 1 teaspoon of dried oregano, 1 teaspoon of kosher salt, and 1 teaspoon of fresh black pepper. Bring

the soup to a boil over medium-high heat. Once boiling, turn the heat down to medium-low and let it simmer gently for 10 minutes.

Add Orzo: Add the $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dry orzo pasta into the pot with the simmering soup. Continue to simmer for 10 more minutes, or until the orzo is cooked al dente (tender but still firm to the bite).

DIRECTIONS

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6. **Add : Orzo:** Add the $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of dry orzo pasta into the pot with the simmering soup. Continue to simmer for 10 more minutes, or until the orzo is cooked al dente (tender but still firm to the bite).
7. **Shred : Chicken:** While the orzo cooks, remove the chicken breasts from the pot again. Using two forks, shred the chicken into bite-sized pieces, or cut it into small cubes. Return the shredded chicken back to the pot with the soup.
8. **Temper : Egg Yolks & Thicken Soup:** In a small bowl, whisk the 2 large egg yolks vigorously. While continuously whisking the egg yolks, slowly add about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the hot broth from the soup into the egg mixture (this is called tempering and prevents the eggs from scrambling). Once tempered, add the warmed egg mixture back into the pot of soup, stirring constantly to combine and slightly thicken the soup. Do not bring the soup back to a boil after adding the egg yolks.
9. **Add : Lemon & Serve:** Stir in the fresh lemon juice (about ... cup from 2 lemons) and the lemon zest, if desired. Taste the soup and add more salt and pepper if necessary. Serve warm immediately and enjoy!
10. **Notes:: Brine the Chicken:** Dissolving salt in warm water creates a brine. Placing chicken in this brine helps it retain moisture and become more tender and flavorful. You can brine chicken for 15 minutes at room temperature, or for up to an hour if refrigerated. Any longer than 15 minutes requires refrigeration.
11. **Tips for Success: Brining for Juiciness:** Don't skip the brining step if you want incredibly juicy and tender chicken. Patting it dry afterward is key for a good sear.
12. **Build : Flavor:** SautØing the vegetables until soft and fragrant before adding the broth creates a flavorful foundation for the soup.
13. **Temper : Eggs Properly:** This is crucial to avoid scrambled eggs in your soup. Slowly drizzle in hot broth while whisking the egg yolks constantly until they're warm before adding them back to the pot.
14. **Don't : Boil After Eggs:** Once the egg mixture is added, do not bring the soup back to a boil, as this can cause the eggs to curdle.
15. **Fresh : Lemon is Key:** Use fresh lemon juice and zest for the brightest, most vibrant lemon flavor. Bottled juice won't provide the same quality.
16. **Season to : Taste:** Always taste your soup as you go and adjust salt and pepper. Broths can vary in sodium content.
17. **Serving Suggestions and Pairings:** This Lemon Chicken Orzo Soup is a complete, satisfying meal on its own. However, it pairs beautifully with simple accompaniments:
18. Warm, crusty bread or dinner rolls for dipping.
19. A light, crisp green salad to add freshness.
20. A sprinkle of extra : Parmesan cheese on top for those who love cheese.
21. For other comforting and flavorful soup or casserole meals, you might also enjoy:

22. My This : Cajun Chicken Sausage Gumbo is My Favorite Bowl of Southern Comfort for another incredibly hearty soup.
23. Storage and Leftover Tips: Leftover Lemon Chicken Orzo Soup can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3-4 days. Note that the orzo will continue to absorb liquid and expand, making the soup thicker. To reheat, gently warm in a saucepan over low heat, adding a splash of extra chicken broth or water to reach your desired consistency. Avoid boiling rapidly, as this can sometimes cause the egg to separate.
24. More Recipes You Will Love: If you loved the comforting and flavorful nature of this soup, you'll find similar satisfaction in these other fantastic recipes:
25. For a light yet incredibly flavorful chicken dish, try my A Light, Tangy Chicken Salad I Actually Crave (and There's No Mayo in Sight!).

SWAPS & NOTES

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Brining Chicken: This step is optional but highly recommended for incredibly juicy and tender chicken.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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