

Spicy, Smokey, & Juicy: The Best Homemade Jamaican Jerk Chicken

The Ultimate Jamaican Jerk Chicken: Authentic Flavor & Spicy Marinade



TIME
30 min

METHOD
Air fryer

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INGREDIENTS

Chicken & Dry Seasoning:

- 10 pieces of chicken (a mix of legs & thighs, bone-in and skin-on is best)
- 2 tbsp chicken seasoning (or kosher salt, adjust to taste)
- 2 tbsp garlic powder
- 2 tbsp onion powder
- 2 tbsp smoked paprika
- 2 tsp white pepper

Jerk Marinade (The Soul of the Dish):

- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup vinegar (white distilled or apple cider)
- Juice of 1 lime
- Juice of 1 orange
- 2 habanero peppers (Use 1 if you prefer less heat, remove seeds for a milder flavor)
- 6 garlic cloves
- Small piece of ginger (about 1 inch, peeled)
- 6 thyme sprigs (leaves only)
- 5 green onions (scallions), roughly chopped
- 1/2 red onion, roughly chopped
- 2 tsp nutmeg (freshly grated is divine)
- 2 tsp ground allspice (do not substitute with "mixed spice")
- 2 tsp cinnamon

DIRECTIONS

1. This recipe requires patience. The marinade time is crucial for developing that deep jerk flavor.
2. Prep the Chicken: Rinse and clean the chicken pieces thoroughly. Pat them completely dry with paper towels. Placing the chicken in a large bowl. Score the thicker pieces of chicken (making shallow cuts) to help the marinade penetrate deeper.
3. Season the Chicken (The Dry Rub Base): In a small bowl, mix the dry spices: chicken seasoning (or salt), garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika, and white pepper. Rub this seasoning mixture all over the chicken, making sure to work it into the scored cuts and under the skin.
4. Make the Marinade: In a high-powered blender or food processor, combine all the marinade ingredients: soy sauce, vinegar, lime juice, orange juice, habanero peppers, garlic, ginger, thyme leaves, green onions, red onion, nutmeg, ground allspice, and cinnamon. Blend until the mixture is completely smooth and forms a thick, vibrant paste/liquid.
5. Marinate: Pour the liquid marinade over the seasoned chicken and coat every piece well. Ensure the marinade gets into the cuts. Cover the bowl (or place the chicken and marinade into a large, resealable bag) and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, but preferably overnight (12-24 hours).
6. Cook: Let the chicken sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before cooking.
7. Grill : Method (Recommended): Preheat your grill to medium heat. Oil the grates. Cook the chicken skin-side down first. Turn occasionally, basting with any leftover marinade during the first half of

cooking. Cook for 35-45 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches 165°F (74°C).

- 8.** Oven : Method: Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Place chicken on a foil-lined, lightly oiled baking sheet. Bake for 45-50 minutes, or until fully cooked. You can broil for the last 5 minutes for crispy skin.
- 9.** Air : Fryer Method: Set the air fryer to 375°F (190°C). Cook chicken in a single layer (work in batches if necessary) for 20-25 minutes, flipping halfway through.
- 10.** Serve: Rest the jerk chicken for 5 minutes before serving. Serve hot.

SWAPS & NOTES

Juicy Results Every Time: Using a mix of chicken legs and thighs (dark meat) ensures that even with the long cooking time needed for flavor development, the chicken stays incredibly moist and tender.

For less heat, wear gloves and remove the seeds and white membrane from the peppers before blending.

Chicken Cut: While bone-in, skin-on dark meat is recommended, you can use chicken breasts.

Just butterfly them to an even thickness and reduce the cooking time to prevent drying out.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Don't Skip the Scoring: The small cuts you make in the chicken are key to letting the marinade work its magic and maximizing flavor absorption.

The Allspice Rule: Do not use allspice berries unless you plan to use them only for smoking the chicken.

You need the ground allspice for the marinade.

Adjusting Spice: If you're nervous about the heat, start with 1 whole habanero.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

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