

RV GODDESS: Chicken with Olives & Lemons

DT ordered this wonderful dish our first week in Italy and we never saw it again on a menu. He loved the salty olives baked with the succulent chicken, so it was up to me to recreate it for him! You will need a large covered Dutch oven. I used chicken thighs, but any bone-in pieces would work well.

1 cup large green olives (pitted)
½ cup small black olives (Kalamata-type)
2 Tablespoons capers
3 Tablespoons Olive Oil
6 split chicken breasts (with bones & skin)
Black pepper
Handful fresh flat-leaf parsley, coarsely chopped
Handful fresh rosemary leaves, coarsely chopped
Handful fresh thyme leaves, coarsely chopped
Zest of one lemon
Juice of one lemon (about ¼ cup)

Heat oven to 350°. Rinse the olives and capers and soak in tap water for 30 minutes (this will remove a lot of the salt), then drain. Heat the olive oil in the bottom of a large oven-proof Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid. Sprinkle the chicken breasts with black pepper, to taste. Fry two or three pieces of chicken at a time in the olive oil, over medium heat, for about five minutes per side, until crisp and brown. When brown, remove to plate, and continuing browning the remainder of the chicken.

Layer half of the chicken in the bottom of the Dutch oven and top with half of the olive and caper mixture, half of the herbs, half of the lemon peel and half of the lemon juice. Repeat with the remaining chicken, olives, herbs, lemon peel and juice.

Bake covered for 30 minutes. Remove lid and bake for an additional 20 minutes, or until juices run clear. Let rest for ten minutes and serve.

Serves 6.

NOTES: The dish ordered in Florence had unpitted olives - I used pitted olives only for politeness-in-eating-value. Use what you have/wish. There is no salt added in the recipe, as even with soaking, the olives are still salty. Salt at the table, if needed. You will only need a simple green salad and a crusty loaf of bread with this dish... and a nice glass of Tuscan wine! The chicken smells so good while it is baking - you won't have to call anyone to dinner!