

02/25/11 - Butterfly Chicken with Fresh Herbs

Before I start on the chicken story, I have to tell you something funny that happened Wednesday afternoon when I was planning to make the chicken. Noticing pulled up rolls of grass sod on the driver's side driveway border at my house, an alarm went off in my head. I recently had replaced the old muddy rocks with special long grass sod so my feet wouldn't track mud into my car or house when I parked in the driveway.

Here before my eyes my new sod was pulled up and back by the corners. What a mystery! Immediately I suspected the neighbor's gardener of some malfeasance . This may seem strange to you, but I live in a very urban area in the middle of the city, in a small enclave of 1920's single family homes. We are surrounded by much denser areas of apartments and condominiums. All of the lots are the same size and so my driveway borders my neighbor's front lawn and my front lawn borders my other neighbor's driveway etc..

As I was contemplating this latest urban harassment (you know traffic, noise, neighbors remodeling), my gardener arrived. I said Jose 'Que Paso'? He said Mrs. Linda, Los raccoons turn up the grass to remove the lombriskas (earth worms) in the middle of the night. Oh! How funny is that, I was ready to tell off the neighbor's gardener or someone and I was saved any embarrassment by Jose. I pictured their cute little raccoon hands pulling up the corners of the sod. I guess although we are urban, in Southern California we still have a lot of critters around.

Now for the chicken. Are you getting bored with roast chicken, chicken schnitzel, barbecue chicken, fried chicken, grilled chicken... Try this. I had two whole chickens in the freezer. I defrosted them. In my refrigerator I had some of those spectacular red and yellow carrots, one fennel bulb, some Cipollini onions from a month ago and beautiful Shitake mushrooms. I planned to make some Ghormeh Sabzi for Thursday's dinner and a variety of fresh herbs was at hand. I created this dish and shoved it in a 400 degree oven. My husband and boys gave the chicken rave reviews.

6 cloves of fresh garlic

Juice of 3-4 limes

2 whole chickens, very cold, slightly frozen

1 bunch of fresh mint

1 small bunch of fresh basil

3 dill fronds

1 tablespoon sumac

2 tablespoons olive oil

8 large multi colored carrots

1 large fennel bulb

8 large Shitake mushrooms

Seal Salt and fresh cracked pepper

8-10 Cipollini onions

2 tablespoons olive oil

Place the defrosting chickens in zipper type plastic bags. One chicken per bag usually works for me. Puree 6-8 cloves of fresh garlic with the juice extracted from 4 limes. Divide the puree between the two plastic bags. Seal the bag and mix the puree around to evenly distribute the flavor over the chicken. Let the chicken sit for about 3-4 hours. Next place the marinated chicken on a cutting board back side up.



Using a kitchen or chicken shears, start at the tail and cut vertically up the back of the chicken clear through. Open the chicken flat, skin side down. Remove the back cartilage, carefully so as not to cut through the meat of the chicken. Keep the chicken intact. Using the shears, remove any spiky rib bones that are sticking up. I wear gloves during this part. The chicken is easier to handle when it is still a bit frosty.



Turn the chicken over, trim off any excess skin. Chop the herbs after they are washed and dried. Mix the basil, mint, and dill. Taking a bit of mixed herbs in your fingers, push the herbs under the breast skin. Next push some chopped herbs under the thigh skin. The skin loosens easily, try not to tear it and place it back in its



Sprinkle the chicken with sumac and drizzle with a little olive oil. Rub the oil in with your fingers.

To prepare the baking dish, first preheat the oven to 400°. Peel the carrots and cut them into large diagonal chunks. Slice the fennel into ½ inch thick julienne strips. Clean the mushrooms. Cut the mushroom stems off with a scissor and slice them into strips. Peel the Cipollini and quarter them. Toss the prepared vegetables with a tablespoon or more of olive oil and place them in a large baking dish about 9 x 13





Place the butterflied and seasoned chicken skin side up on top of the vegetables. Place in the preheated oven and roast until golden and toasty, about 1 hour or a



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