



## For crazy weeknights, dinner in a bag that isn't takeout - Weeknight Lemon Chicken Dinner-In-A-Bag -

*By: Melissa d'Arabian July 13, 2015*

Life is busy. We don't always have the luxury of thumbing through our favorite cookbooks, marking appealing recipes with sticky notes for dinners sometime off in the future when we will somehow have time to salt-cure a cod or dry-age a side of beef in our garage fridge. Sometimes, we just need to get dinner on the table. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it should still be tasty and nutritious.

Enter the chicken leg and thigh!

Often overlooked by the healthy cook due to its higher fat content, dark chicken meat is underappreciated. Yes, the dark meat has a few more grams of fat than the white meat of the breasts (a 3 1/2-ounce serving of breast meat has about 4 grams of fat, while the same amount of dark meat has just under 6 grams). And the higher cholesterol of the dark meat means the breast probably still should be in your rotation.



But chicken legs and thighs are luscious in texture and full of flavor and protein (about 28 grams per serving). They also are much lower in saturated fat than most cuts of red meat, and they offer more iron per serving than chicken breasts. Perhaps most important of all for the busy weeknight cook is that bone-in dark meat chicken is very forgiving in terms of cooking time. Which is to say, it is very hard to overcook dark chicken meat.

So on weeknights when my husband and I both have to work and one daughter has dance and the other three have soccer, lacrosse and more soccer, I totally appreciate the forgiveness offered by the dark meat.

One of my favorite weeknight chicken leg and thigh strategies is to load them up in a large plastic bag in the morning, dump in some veggies and a quick marinade, then just toss the whole thing into the refrigerator to sit all day. After work, I dump the contents of the bag into a baking dish and pop it into the oven while I change into something more comfortable (by which I mean sweats). Dinner, done!

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### WEEKNIGHT LEMON CHICKEN DINNER-IN-A-BAG

Start to Finish: 1 hour, plus marinating  
Servings: 4

8 bone-in chicken drumsticks or thighs, or a mix

1/4 cup lemon juice

1/4 cup olive oil

3 cloves garlic, minced

2 teaspoons dried thyme

1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)

Kosher salt and ground black pepper

1 large red or yellow onion, cut into 8 wedges

4 medium red potatoes, halved

Using a paper towel in each hand to help grip the chicken pieces, remove and discard the skin by pulling it off.

In a 2-gallon zip-close plastic bag, mix together the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, thyme, red pepper flakes (if using), and a hefty pinch each of salt and pepper. Add the chicken, onion and potatoes, seal the bag and gently turn over several times to evenly coat the contents with the marinade.

Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 12 hours, turning the bag once or twice if convenient.

When ready to cook, heat the oven to 375 F. Coat a rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray. Dump the contents of the bag onto the pan, spread into an even layer, then bake uncovered until the chicken registers 175 F at the thickest parts, about 40 minutes. If the potatoes and onions brown too quickly on one side, turn them for more even cooking.

Nutrition information per serving: 610 calories; 220 calories from fat (36 percent of total calories); 25 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 240 mg cholesterol; 540 mg sodium; 40 g carbohydrate; 5 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 55 g protein.

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Food Network star Melissa d'Arabian is an expert on healthy eating on a budget. She is the author of the cookbook, "Supermarket Healthy".