

# SALT + VINEGAR BUTTERMILK CHICKEN WITH TOMATOES AND A CARB

Serves 2 (but doubles easily!)

**REMEMBER, BEST PRACTICE: READ THE RECIPE ALL THE WAY THROUGH BEFORE YOU START COOKING!**

This recipe doesn't call for buttermilk because... you're making your own by combining vinegar and milk. Avoid using cast iron for cooking: the acidity of the vinegar will react in untasty ways. And if you want a kick, say yes to the cayenne. Up to you.

Expect the sauce to have a texture of curds + whey. Bonus: when eaten cold, the bits of chilled buttermilk have a nearly feta-like effect, speckled throughout the sauce. Almost worth making for the leftovers alone.

Another great way to serve this? Return the chicken legs to the skillet when you finish the pan sauce. Tear up the chicken directly in the skillet, saucing as you go, and serve, in a more shreddy kind of manner.

**2 large chicken legs, about 2 pounds**

**1-2 juicy lemons**

**2 1/4 cups whole milk**

**2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar, plus additional for serving**

**2 tablespoons olive oil, plus additional for the sauce and serving**

**1 tablespoon nutritional yeast**

**2 cloves garlic, finely grated**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional)**

**1 bunch basil**

**10 ounces (about 3/4 of a pint) cherry tomatoes, halved**

**1/2 cup Israeli couscous (You can also serve with any cooked, toothsome grain, such as wheat berries, farro, barley, or brown rice)**

**Maldon salt, for serving**

1. Place the chicken legs in a large resealable plastic bag. (You can also marinate in a bowl but I like the "surround sound" quality of a Ziplock.)

2. Finely grate the rind of one lemon and add the zest to a medium bowl or large measuring cup. Reserve the zested lemon for serving. Add the milk, vinegar, 1 tablespoon olive oil, nutritional yeast, garlic, 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper (really measure it— don't skimp), and cayenne pepper, if using. Whisk to combine.

3. Scrape the marinade into the bag with the chicken (placing the bag into a bowl can help keep the bag upright). Push out all of the air and seal. Transfer to the refrigerator (in the bowl, to safeguard any potential leaking), and let marinate, at least 1 hour and up to 24, flipping the bag a couple of times if you think about it. Try to marinate for at least 4 hours if you have the time. You'll be able to tell the difference!

4. When ready to cook, preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Transfer the chicken and all of the marinade (get every last drop!) to a stainless steel or enamel cast iron skillet just big enough to give the chicken some breathing room. If you're finding that the sauce reduces so much that it is starting to burn during cooking, worry not! Add splashes of water to the skillet as necessary if the sauce level gets low.

5. Drizzle the tops of the legs with the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Nestle about 4 basil sprigs into the pan and transfer to the oven.

6. Roast for 30 minutes. Generously baste the top of the legs with the cooking liquid (don't worry... it's supposed to look like curds and whey). Continue roasting for an additional 20-25 minutes, until the skin is deeply golden and the sauce has reduced by about half.

7. Increase the temperature to 450 and continue cooking until the skin is even more deeply burnished and the chicken is super tender, about 5-15 minutes more. (Test this by wiggling or pulling at the drumstick. It should move freely. You may even be able to pull the bone out entirely. Or, use a fork to pull lightly at the edges of the chicken. The meat should shred easily.) Legs are hard to overcook so be bold about really taking the skin to the dark side.

8. While the chicken roasts, cook Israeli couscous (or any grain of your choice, cooked to its specification): bring a medium pot of water to a boil. Salt generously. Add the Israeli couscous and cook until just tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain.

9. When the chicken has finished cooking, transfer the legs to a plate. Now for the pan sauce: if you have a good amount of cooking liquid in the skillet (about 1 cup or so), great. If you have much more than that, place skillet over high heat and cook, stirring, until reduced to about a cup.

Or, if your sauce is thick and reduced and shy of 1 cup of sauce, place over medium heat and begin adding water, a tablespoon at a time, while scraping the sides of the pan to incorporate any brown bits into the sauce. The goal is to make enough sauce to serve with your chicken and dress your choice of accompaniment. Let simmer for a minute, whisking to combine.

10. Here's where the vinegar comes back in. With the heat on medium, add 1 teaspoon of vinegar. Whisk to combine, and taste. The sauce should be bright, punchy, and reminiscent of salt + vinegar potato chips. Add more vinegar, a teaspoon at a time, until your desired level of vinegary pucker is reached. (During testing in different ovens, there were some iterations that wanted 1 teaspoon of vinegar, and others that tasted best with 3 teaspoons. Every oven is different and will reduce the sauce at different rates. Use your tastebuds to help guide you!)

11. If desired, transfer sauce to a blender and puree until smooth. This is really just personal preference. Drizzling in some olive oil during blending will add a nice richness, too. Return blended sauce to the skillet.

12. Add tomatoes to the pan, stir to incorporate, and cook 30 seconds, just to warm through. Squeeze the lemon into the skillet, along with a handful of basil leaves. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve in shallow bowls with the chicken legs and Israeli couscous. (You can also shred up the chicken and the crispy skin directly in the skillet, saucing as you go, rather than serve the legs whole). Garnish with additional lemon, a drizzle of olive oil, and Maldon salt, if desired.

# NOODLE