

CHICKEN and DUMPLINGS

Serves 6.

By Dennis W. Viau; inspired by my mother's recipe.

I grew up with this food. My mother made it occasionally and it was always delicious. The problem is that there are many different variations named "dumplings," from looking like noodles to filled pot stickers. I made the dumplings my mother made, with one exception: I used buttermilk.



Ingredients:

For the Chicken:

One 5½ pound (2½kg) chicken, whole or in pieces
2 cups (475ml) chicken stock, preferably homemade

For the Dumplings:

1 large egg
½ cup (118ml) buttermilk
3 tablespoons butter, room temperature or melted
1 cup (5 ounces/172g) all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
Optional: freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon baking soda
3 tablespoons flour

Directions:

If the chicken is whole, section it into pieces (drumsticks, thighs, wings, breasts, and back), leaving the bones in place. Cook 30 to 45 minutes in the stock until thoroughly cooked. (I used a pressure cooker, which cooks the meat in 20 to 30 minutes). Let cool until warm and then remove the meat, discarding the skin and the bones. Refrigerate the stock, preferably overnight, and then skim off the fat.

Melt the skimmed stock in a heavy pot and add the boneless chicken. Bring the stock to a boil and reduce the heat to maintain a slow simmer.

While the stock is melting: In a medium bowl combine the egg and buttermilk and mix well with a whisk. Add the butter and whisk, breaking the butter up into small beads. In a large bowl, combine the flour, salt, (optional pepper), and baking soda, blending thoroughly. Add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture and stir only until combined.

Spoon dollops of dumpling batter, dividing into six portions, onto the simmering liquid. Place the cover on the pot and let the dumplings steam 10 minutes without removing the lid. Meanwhile, mix 3 tablespoons of flour into ½ cup cool water to make a slurry.

Remove the cover and transfer the dumplings to a bowl. Stir the slurry into the stock and raise the heat to bring to a boil to thicken. Reduce the heat and let the liquid simmer for 2 to 3 minutes to cook the flour in the slurry, eliminating any raw flour flavor. Then portion the cooked chicken and stock into bowls. Place a dumpling in each bowl and serve.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.

STEP-BY-STEP

1



The chicken stock in the plastic bag his homemade. I make it from chicken trim and freeze it in one-cup plastic containers. I then pop out the frozen stock and store it in ziplock bags for soup and other uses. In the Recipe Archive on my web site, under Basics, there is a procedure for making your own chicken stock.

The measuring cup in the middle holds buttermilk, my one main improvement over my mother's recipe. Although a full cup is shown here, I used only $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (118ml) of the buttermilk in the dumpling batter.

2



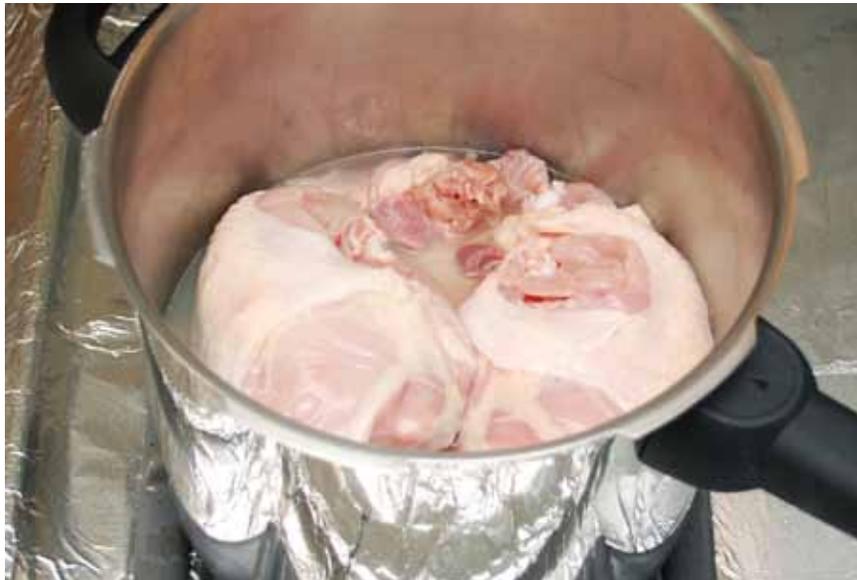
My mother cooked her chicken for chicken and dumplings using a pressure cooker. I am no different, except that I am using a modern, quiet, stainless steel pressure cooker, unlike my mother's old jiggle top cooker, which made a lot of noise.

Most recipes use water, to which you add chopped vegetables to help flavor the liquid. I am starting with chicken stock that was made with onion, carrot, and celery; so I can use just the stock here.

3

I started with a whole, 5½ pound (2½ kg) chicken, which I sectioned into pieces: wings, drumsticks, thighs, breasts, and back. In the Recipe Archive, under Basics, there is also a procedure for deboning a chicken. You don't need to debone the bird for this recipe, but the procedure will help you to see how to section the chicken. There is also a video. Or, you can buy chicken already cut into pieces.

Note: if you prefer only white chicken meat, you could buy half a dozen bone-in chicken breasts for this recipe.

4

Place the chicken pieces and the stock in the pot and bring to a boil. (You could use a standard stock pot or large pan.) Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook 30 to 45 minutes until thoroughly cooked. In the pressure cooker the meat cooks in 20 to 30 minutes.

When cooked, remove from the heat and let cool until the chicken is warm and can be handled comfortably. Strain the stock into a bowl, cover, and refrigerate. Pull the chicken meat from the bones and discard the bones and skin. I did this step the evening before. Refrigerate the chicken until needed.

5



When the stock has thoroughly chilled, it will set up into a gelatin. Skim the fat from the surface and discard. Some people save the chicken fat for cooking.

6



Break up the chicken into morsels.

7



In a large heavy pot, heat the stock and chicken until the liquid just comes up to the boil. Then reduce the heat and keep it at a gentle simmer.

8



While the stock and chicken are heating, prepare the dumpling batter. Combine the buttermilk and egg, using a whisk to blend well. Then add the butter and whisk vigorously to break the butter into small beads.

9



In a large bowl, combine the flour, salt, and baking soda. I add pepper, but very little, as it seems to overpower the delicate flavor easily.

10



Add the buttermilk mixture to the flour mixture and stir only until it is combined.

11



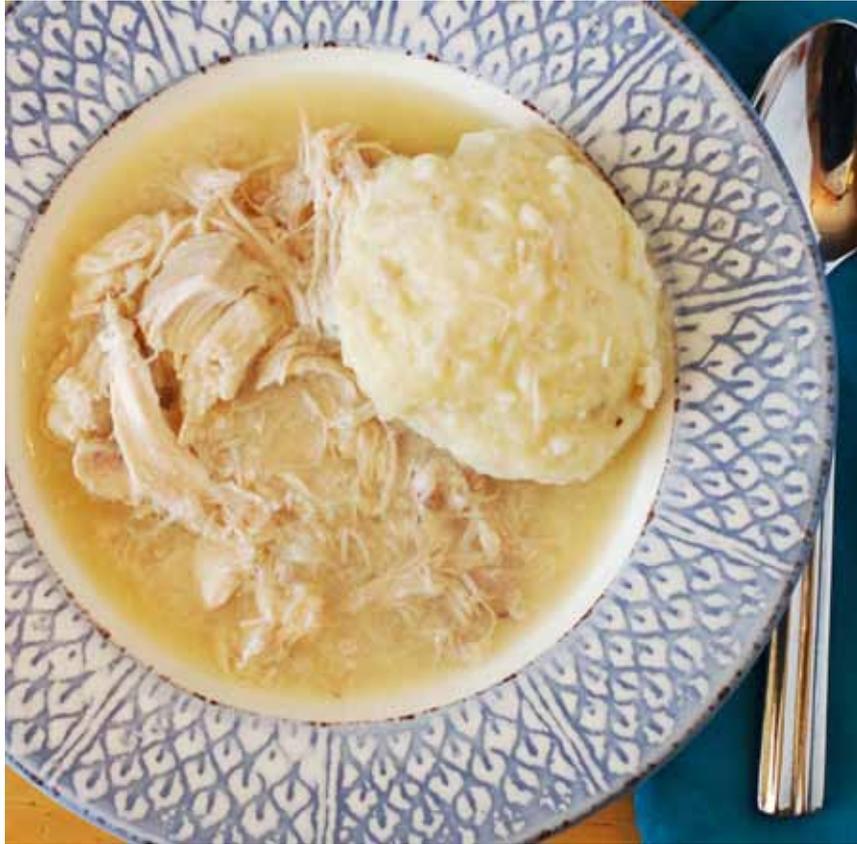
Using a large spoon or ice cream scoop, spoon large dollops of batter onto the top of the simmering liquid. Try to divide the dough equally into 6 servings. (I didn't get this quite right. There is a little dollop in the middle of the five others.) Then cover the pot and leave it undisturbed for 10 minutes.

12



When you remove the lid the dough should be cooked and expanded into dumplings. These are very similar to the dumplings my mother served.

Transfer the dumplings to a bowl. Mix 3 tablespoons of flour with cool water to make a slurry. Stir into the stock. Raise the heat to bring to a boil to thicken and cook the flour, 2 to 3 minutes.

13

Spoon some of the cooked chicken and thickened stock (it should be only lightly thickened) into a shallow bowl. Place a dumpling on top and serve.

Conclusion

Chicken and dumplings is definitely comfort food, especially because I ate it so often as a child in New England. On cold winter days, when the wind is blowing and there is snow on the ground or a cold rain is lashing against the windows, nothing soothes the soul better than a bowl of hot chicken and dumplings. There are other ways to make this family favorite, but this was my mother's way.