

Braised Chicken In Saffron Cream And Pasta

If you like saffron, this one is for you! It's saffrony and winey and yummy! When I make this chicken, I like to serve it in the Italian manner, I use some of the sauce to dress the paccheri/pacchero pasta (a very large tube pasta with a big hole in the middle) as a primi (1st course), then follow with the chicken drizzled with more sauce and a green vegetable as my secondo (2nd course). An excellent braise to be enjoyed in the fall, winter or spring months. If you can't find the Paccheri/Pacchero you can substitute Rigatoni.

Makes 4 – 6 Servings

2 ½ - 2 ¾ lbs. whole chicken thighs, skin on
Salt & freshly ground black pepper
2 Tbsp. EVOO
2 cups chopped cooking onions
6 garlic cloves, peeled & crushed
2 cups dry white wine, preferably Italian
1 tsp. saffron threads, crushed (don't be tempted to use powdered)
2 cups (or more) low-salt/no-salt chicken stock** or purchased chicken broth
1 cup whipping cream
2 Tbsp. lemon juice (or more to taste)
1/3 – ½ cup chopped fresh basil
12 oz. - 1 lb. Paccheri/Pacchero pasta or Rigatoni
½ cup + grated Parmigiano Reggiano

To Make the Chicken:

Add the saffron to the wine & set aside.

Season the chicken with salt & pepper. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat & add the oil; add the chicken, skin side down & cook until golden on both sides; approximately 7 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a plate as it is browned; add the onions & garlic to the drippings in the skillet; sauté until the onions are slightly softened but not browned, 7 – 8 minutes. Add the wine-saffron mixture to the pan; bring to a boil. Continue to boil until the liquid is thickened & reduced by less than half; about 8 minutes. Add 2 cups chicken stock to the pan. Return the chicken to the skillet; bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low; cover & simmer gently until chicken is cooked through (adjusting the heat to prevent boiling & turning the chicken over after 20 minutes; continue cooking with the lid on, for another 10 – 15 minutes until the chicken juices run clear when pierced with a skewer.

Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil & preheat the oven to 180F. Place a large pasta bowl in the oven to warm, along with serving bowls/plates for the pasta.

When the chicken is cooked through, remove to a warm platter & keep warm while finishing the sauce. Spoon off fat from the juices in the skillet & discard. Add the cream to the pan & boil until the sauce is reduced to 2 ½ cups & is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, about 10 minutes. Set aside half the sauce in the warm oven to be used for serving the chicken.

Cook the Pasta:

While the sauce is reducing, add 1 - 2 Tbsp. salt to the boiling water; add the pasta to the pot & cook according to directions on the package, or until al dente. When pasta is cooked, drain; add to the pan containing the remaining saffron sauce & toss well to coat the pasta, 1 – 2 minutes. Place the pasta into the large, warm serving bowl & top with some of the basil; serve, passing Parmigiano Reggiano to sprinkle on the pasta.

To serve the chicken, nap the chicken with the saffron sauce & sprinkle with the remaining chopped basil.

****If you wish to make your own chicken stock, please go to Making Stock.**