Easy 4 Ingredient Chicken Breast

This easy four-ingredient chicken breast recipe uses chicken, basil pesto, mozzarella and cherry tomatoes. The pesto supplies oil and seasoning, so no separate cooking oil, salt or garnish is needed in the base recipe. Bake until the chicken reaches 165°F (74°C).



Prep	Cook	Additional	Total	Servings
10 min	22 min	5 min	37 min	4

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts / 680 g, in 4 portions
- 1/4 cup prepared basil pesto / 60 g
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella / 85 g
- 1 1/2 cups cherry tomatoes / 225 g, halved

Instructions

1. Heat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a shallow baking dish with parchment suitable for this temperature.

2. Pat the chicken dry. Flatten the thickest part of each portion to about 3/4 inch (2 cm).

3. Spread pesto over both sides of the chicken and arrange the pieces without overlap. Place the tomatoes around them.

4. Bake for 15 minutes. Carefully spoon the mozzarella over the chicken.

5. Continue baking for about 5 to 10 minutes, checking the largest portion with a thermometer. Remove only when it reaches 165°F (74°C).

6. Rest for 5 minutes. Spoon the roasted tomato juices over the chicken and serve.

Time, Temperature & Doneness

Cook every chicken portion to 165°F (74°C) in its thickest part. Use an instant-read thermometer; exterior browning, meat color and clear juices are not reliable substitutes. Listed cooking times are estimates and vary with thickness and equipment.

Ingredient Notes & Substitutions

Pesto: Choose a product with ingredients suitable for your diet; pesto commonly contains nuts and cheese.

Mozzarella: Low-moisture shredded mozzarella melts with less released water than very wet fresh cheese.

Four-ingredient rule: The base dish uses exactly four purchased ingredients. Suggested variations are optional separate versions.

Tips for Success

Use pesto with enough oil to coat the chicken.

Keep the chicken in one layer.

Add cheese near the end so it stays tender.

Start checking early if your portions are thinner.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Adding extra salt without tasting the salty pesto first.

Using overlapping breasts that cook unevenly.

Counting side dishes or optional variations as base ingredients.

Recipe Variations

Red pesto version: Replace basil pesto with sun-dried tomato pesto.

Cheddar version: Replace mozzarella with the same weight of mild cheddar.

Pepper version: Replace tomatoes with 2 thinly sliced bell peppers.

Serving Suggestions

Serve with separately prepared rice, pasta or a green salad. Those sides are not included in the four-ingredient count.

Storage

Refrigerate cooked leftovers promptly in shallow containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour when exposed to temperatures above 90°F (32°C). Keep at 40°F (4°C) or below and use within 3 to 4 days.

Freezing

Freeze promptly cooled cooked portions airtight at 0°F (-18°C) or below for up to 3 months for best quality. Label with the date and thaw in the refrigerator. Continuous freezing preserves safety longer, but texture can decline.

Reheating

Reheat covered in a 350°F (175°C) oven with a small splash of water or broth until the center reaches 165°F (74°C). Check more than one spot; heat thin pieces only as long as needed.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does this really use only four ingredients?
Yes: chicken, pesto, mozzarella and tomatoes. The recipe requires no extra seasoning or oil.

Can I omit the cheese?
Yes. It becomes a three-ingredient pesto chicken dish.

Can I use chicken thighs?
Boneless thighs work, but timing changes; verify 165°F (74°C).

Why is there liquid in the dish?
Tomatoes and chicken release juices. Spoon them over the serving or serve with rice.

Recipe & Sources

View the recipe on HowToCookChickenRecipes.com

Budget Bytes - chicken recipe method reference

FoodSafety.gov - safe minimum internal temperatures

FoodSafety.gov - cold food storage chart

FoodSafety.gov - prompt chilling and cross-contamination prevention