Italian Chicken Noodle Soup

Chicken thighs gently simmer with onion, carrot and celery before small pasta and spinach finish this Italian-style soup. Cook the pasta separately when planning several days of leftovers.

SERVES 6	PREP 15 min	COOK 45 min	EXTRA 0 min



Ingredients

- 1 lb (450 g) boneless skinless chicken thighs
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 2 medium carrots (about 150 g), diced
- 2 celery stalks (about 100 g), diced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 6 cups (1.4 L) low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/2 tsp fine salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 4 oz (115 g) dry ditalini or small egg noodles
- 2 cups (60 g) baby spinach
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) lemon juice
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley

Method

1. Heat oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Cook onion, carrots and celery for 6 minutes, stirring. Add garlic, basil and oregano for 30 seconds.
2. Add broth, bay leaf, salt, pepper and thawed chicken thighs. Bring to a gentle simmer, partially cover and cook about 20 to 25 minutes until every thigh reaches 165°F (74°C).
3. Transfer chicken to a clean board. Add pasta to the simmering broth and cook according to its package time, usually 7 to 10 minutes.
4. Shred chicken with two forks. Return it to the soup with spinach and stir until spinach wilts and everything is hot.
5. Remove bay leaf. Stir in lemon juice and parsley, taste the broth and serve.

Doneness & safe handling

Cook each chicken portion to at least 165°F (74°C), measuring in the thickest meat without touching bone. Check several large diced pieces when applicable. Casseroles and reheated leftovers also need 165°F (74°C). Timing and surface color do not replace a food thermometer.

Cook’s notes

Keep the chicken at a gentle simmer to avoid a hard, dry texture.

Common mistake

Leaving the bay leaf in the serving bowl or boiling pasta far beyond its package time affects the finished soup.

Variations

Bean: Add 1 drained can white beans with spinach. Tomato: Add 1 cup diced canned tomatoes with broth. Pasta-free: Omit noodles and use extra vegetables.

Serving

Divide into 6 bowls, distributing chicken and pasta evenly. Bread is optional and prepared separately.

Storage

Refrigerate promptly in shallow covered containers within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90°F (32°C). Keep at 40°F (4°C) or below and use within 3 to 4 days. Do not leave a large batch on the counter to cool completely.

Freezing

Freeze promptly cooled portions airtight at 0°F (-18°C) or below for up to 3 months for best quality. Thaw in the refrigerator. Freeze the soup without noodles for better texture and add cooked noodles after reheating.

Reheating

Reheat covered on the stovetop or in a microwave with a splash of water or broth, turning or stirring for even heating. Check several thickest portions for 165°F (74°C). Do not reheat chilled leftovers in a slow cooker.

Quick questions

Can I use leftover chicken? Use 2 cups shredded cooked chicken and add it after the vegetables and pasta cook; reheat the soup and chicken to 165°F (74°C).

Can I freeze it? Freeze the soup base without pasta for the best texture, then add freshly cooked pasta after reheating.

What makes it Italian-style? Basil, oregano, small pasta and spinach give this version an Italian-inspired flavor profile.

Recipe references: Budget Bytes - Chicken Noodle Soup, soup-building technique • https://www.budgetbytes.com/chicken-noodle-soup/
USDA FSIS - Safe Minimum Internal Temperature Chart • https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/safe-temperature-chart
USDA FSIS - Leftovers and Food Safety • https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/leftovers-and-food-safety