Take Back Your Weeknights With Sheet Pan Chicken Thighs

Looking for recipes to make this week? Nothing beats a sheet pan chicken recipe for a quick and easy weeknight dinner win.

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The popularity of a sheet pan dinner is easy to understand: It's quick, easy to clean up, and best of all? The bulk of the cook time is hands off — just pop your baking sheet in the oven and get back to the rest of your evening. Of course, some foods lend themselves to sheet pan cooking better than others: vegetables, potatoes, and chicken are all great places to start. For our latest recipes, we wanted to feature chicken thighs. Skinless chicken breasts are prone to drying out in the oven — and cost more than a juicy skin-on bone-in thigh. Here are just two ways these economical and flavorful cuts of chicken can rescue your weeknight dinner.

To create these two new recipes, we worked with Eden Westbrook, a recipe developer and blogger at Sweet Tea & Thyme. With chicken thighs being so versatile, the only trouble we had was narrowing down our options to two recipes! We settled on a pair of recipes with Asian flavors; once you've got the method down, you can add and modify to create your own glazed masterpieces and experiment with different flavors.

Sheet Pan Teriyaki Chicken and Broccoli

This kid-friendly teriyaki chicken recipe features chicken thighs flavored with nutty sesame oil, a sweet honey-soy glaze, bright green broccoli florets, and a sprinkling of sesame seeds and green onions to top it all off. The teriyaki sauce is whipped up from scratch with a couple of simple ingredients, so you don't have to worry about any weird additives in your family's weeknight meal. Feel free to use less-sodium soy sauce if you're watching your salt intake.

Sheet Pan Teriyaki Sesame Chicken and Broccoli from Yummly

Photo by Eden Westbrook

Sheet Pan Sichuan Chicken and Vegetables

If spicy is more your style, give this Sichuan Chicken recipe a try — it's like a chicken stir fry you make in the oven! Red bell peppers, snap peas, asparagus, and mushrooms are combined with the chicken thighs in a spicy sriracha and rice wine vinegar stir fry sauce with crushed red peppers. It's a peppy meal that's sure to liven up your busy weeknights. Serve with a side of white or brown rice to complete the stir-fry vibe.

Sheet Pan Sichuan Chicken and Vegetables from Yummly

Photo by Eden Westbrook

Sheet Pan Meal Basics

The basic preparation method is similar for both of these Asian-inspired sheet pan chicken dinners: first start by roasting chicken thighs on a large sheet pan while a quick glaze is cooked on top of the stove. The glaze is then brushed on the chicken skin to cook for a while longer before being tossed with a bunch of healthy veggies to create a flavorful meal that cooks together on a baking sheet — no last-minute fussing with timers or watching multiple pots to make sure your sides are ready at the same time as your main dish. With any sheet pan meal you prepare, you'll need to add the vegetables and remaining sauce to the pan during the last 15 minutes of the total time due to their shorter cooking time.

How To Make Glazed Chicken Thighs (And Some Notes On Food Safety)

Start off by preparing the chicken. Food safety experts recommend that you *don't* rinse your chicken before using — you're actually more likely to spread bacteria around through the splashing water in your sink. Instead, you just need to pat your chicken dry with a paper towel before seasoning with a little kosher salt and black pepper, then place the chicken skin-side up on your baking sheet. Want to make clean up even easier? Line your baking sheet with parchment paper or aluminum foil before adding the chicken to the pan. (Note: parchment paper is naturally non-stick, but if using aluminum foil, it's helpful to spray both sides with cooking spray to keep the chicken and veg from sticking to the foil.)

The chicken then goes into the oven for 15-20 minutes while you prepare the glaze. This time in the oven without any glaze allows the chicken skin to start crisping up and makes sure your glaze doesn't get gummy or burnt. Meanwhile, the glaze is made by mixing water, soy sauce, and other flavoring ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat. To make the glaze thick enough to brush on to the chicken, Eden employs a classic technique: making a "slurry." There are a couple of different ways to thicken sauces, and a slurry is one of the easiest: it's simply a mixture of cornstarch and water that gets whisked into the sauce. It's also naturally gluten-free, so is a great alternative thickening technique to the classic French flour-and-butter-based "roux." To make the glaze entirely gluten-free, replace the soy sauce with gluten-free tamari.

Back on the topic of food safety, you'll notice that both recipes have you divide the prepared glaze into two bowls before using. Raw chicken can harbor bacteria that neither a rinse in water or a pat-down with paper towels will get rid of — the only way to rid chicken of bacteria is to kill it with heat. When cooked to the right temperature (a minimum of 165 degrees F), any bacteria on the chicken will be destroyed. But when basting or glazing chicken below that temperature, it's still possible for your brush to pick up bacteria from the chicken. For this reason, you'll want to use a separate small bowl and a clean brush for the chicken glaze, and reserve a second bowl of glaze that has no contact with the chicken to use with your vegetables.

After an initial dousing with glaze, the chicken returns to the oven to cook for another 15-20 minutes before getting glazed a second time, at which point the vegetables get added to the pan in a single layer along with the reserved glaze. Your easy dinner is just about done!

Ready to get cooking? Check out the full recipes in the links below. Remember, these two dinner recipes are just a starting point. Next time, swap out the asparagus or snap peas for fresh green beans or snow peas to shake things up, or use brussels sprouts in place of the broccoli. Once you're hooked on sheet pan cooking, search Yummly's sheet pan recipes for even more #weeknightwins.

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Sheet Pan Teriyaki Sesame Chicken and Broccoli

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Sheet Pan Sichuan Chicken and Vegetables

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