



# Culinary Craftwork Newsletter: October 2010

## *Savory Chicken Dinners*

*Fresh herbs make a difference.*

### Introduction

This issue of the newsletter focuses on chicken with a few of my favorite recipes: **Chicken with Roasted Garlic, Saffron & Parsley (Page 6)**; **Sautéed Chicken Breast with Shallots & Thyme (Page 8)**; **Sautéed Chicken Breast with Apples & Curry Cream (Page 10)**; and **Chicken Fricassee with Vinegar & Tarragon (Page 12)**.

Culinary Craftwork is my business, which specializes in offering private, semi-private, and group cooking classes. Some of you may remember me from when I taught cooking classes at Williams-Sonoma in Los Gatos. I am grateful to all of you who encouraged me to branch out on my own!

The Culinary Craftwork experience is different in that the classes I offer are fully customizable to what you want. I teach the classes in your own home at a time that is convenient for you. And I do all the shopping.

*It is my mission to give you the tools you need to prepare meals that will seduce you with savor and wow your guests.*

My website contains many sample menus that focus on building different skills, but I am happy to partner with you and come up with something new. The classes are fun, informal, and informative — and you get to eat!

The Culinary Craftwork newsletter is a monthly publication that focuses on seasonal fare with recipes and pictures. My newsletter also includes a section called "Ask the Chef," so please don't be shy—email me with your questions.



### Professional In-home Cooking Classes

Culinary Craftwork offers professionally taught in-home cooking classes by a chef with over 20 years' experience in restaurants and catering.

The classes are designed to build basic skills and boost confidence in the kitchen. I teach the classes in your own home, offer themed menus, cooking class parties and catered dinner parties.

Full class descriptions and prices are available on my website.

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## Nutritional Facts About Chicken

| <b>Nutrition Facts</b>  |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Serving Size 1/2 breast, bone and skin removed 118g (118 g)   |                      |
| Amount Per Serving  |                      |
| <b>Calories</b> 130   | Calories from Fat 13 |
| % Daily Value*  |                      |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 1g   | 2%                   |
| Saturated Fat 0g  | 2%                   |
| Trans Fat 0g  |                      |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 68mg   | 23%                  |
| <b>Sodium</b> 77mg  | 3%                   |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 0g  | 0%                   |
| Dietary Fiber 0g  | 0%                   |
| Sugars 0g   |                      |
| <b>Protein</b> 27g  |                      |
| Vitamin A 0%  | Vitamin C 2%         |
| Calcium 1%  | Iron 5%              |
| <small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small> |                      |
| ©www.NutritionData.com  |                      |

- Low in fats—more than half of the fats it contains are unsaturated fats, which, help in lowering cholesterol.
- Dietary protein—required to perform a number of vital functions in the body and is essential for maintaining muscle and bone density.
- Vitamin B6—which is required for carbohydrate, fat and protein metabolism, production of red blood cells and also for strengthening the immune system.
- Niacin (or vitamin B3)—required for the proper functioning of the digestive system, skin and nerves.
- Important trace elements—selenium which boosts the immune system and phosphorus which supports formation and maintenance of teeth and bones.

[Click here for more nutritional information.](#)



My husband and I eat a lot of chicken. Once considered a delicacy, and still considered as such in other parts of the world, chicken is readily available in the U.S. and is probably the most versatile of meats. The United States is the leading world producer and exporter of poultry products, three-quarters of which represent chicken meat in various forms. This year the USDA projects that the U.S. will produce over 36 billion pounds of chicken. The average American eats about 80 pounds of chicken per year!

When I go shopping there are so many chicken choices. In fact there is so much product that it's easy to be confused. I know that I often stand in front of the poultry counter considering the choices. Much of the chicken you'll find is mass produced on farms: there are broiler chickens, fryers, hens, roasters, capons and various packaged chicken parts. In general the tags refer to size, weight, and age of the birds.

Additionally there is natural chicken, free range chicken, and organic chicken. I realized that to my embarrassment, I was not precisely clear on the differences. So, I thought I would put together an article clarifying some of the terms and include a few of my favorite recipes.

**So, now the question: What do all these labels mean to me as a chef and consumer?**

After giving it some thought, I've come to the conclusion that "all natural" and "minimally processed" don't have a whole lot of meaning to me. When I read about or see pictures of the crowded conditions in most chicken farms, it's not a stretch to understand how disease can run rampant—hence the need for antibiotics. I would like to think that the chicken I buy has had fresh air and natural daylight, good feed and no growth hormones or antibiotics. But I wouldn't bet on it.

Am I willing to pay more for that? Yes, usually. I frequently buy organic chicken, but not always. Sometimes price and convenience take precedence. My husband likes to try to second-guess which type of chicken I'm serving on any given day, but the reality is that there is not a huge difference in the flavor of organic vs. conventionally farmed chicken.

Tenderness and juiciness seems more related to skill in preparation. I wish I could say, "Wow, this organic chicken is really fabulous!" But for the most part, I cannot tell the difference. I buy organic because I want to support sustainable farming.

Read on to discover what all those labels really mean... and more.

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## What does "organic" really mean?



Organic food is produced by farmers who make it a priority to use renewable resources and conserve soil and water to ensure environmental wellness for future generations. *Organic meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, bioengineering or ionizing radiation.* But that's not all.

Before a product can actually be labeled "organic," a government-approved certifier must inspect the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet USDA organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it gets to your local supermarket must be certified as well.

Organic chickens must be given access to the outdoors, sunlight, fresh air, shade and shelter. In essence, they are "free range." They are provided with clean drinking water and enough food for flocks to eat simultaneously without competition, according to USDA regulations. Though healthy chickens aren't medicated, medication may be administered if they get sick—though it may mean that bird has lost its organic status. It's that simple.

### How can I tell if something is organic?

You have to look at package labels and hope that you can actually read them. Along with the national organic standards, the USDA has strict labeling rules to help consumers know the exact organic content of the food they buy. The USDA Organic Seal tells you that a product is *at least 95% organic*.

Processed products that contain less than 70% organic ingredients cannot use the term "organic" anywhere on the display label. However, they may identify the specific ingredients that are organically produced on the ingredient statement on the information label.

Poultry producers and handlers have to pass government inspection before labeling their products as organic, according to the USDA. Inspection ensures compliance with National Organic Program standards during every phase of production until the chicken reaches the grocery store or restaurant.

*Farmers selling less than \$5,000 in organic products each year are the only exception to the labeling rules. If they adhere to organic farming standards, they can use the word organic, but not apply the official USDA Organic label.*

### What is the difference between "organic" and "natural" ?

The food industry uses the term "natural" to indicate that a food has been minimally processed and is free of preservatives and coloring agents. I had to stop and think about what "minimally processed" really means, so I looked it up.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) states that minimally processed includes "traditional processes used to make food edible or to preserve it or to make it safe for human consumption e.g., smoking, roasting, freezing, drying, and fermenting." Again, organic foods must be grown and processed without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, genetic engineering, growth hormones, irradiation and antibiotics, among others.

Basically, "minimally processed" is a term with little meaning that can be stretched to encompass many aspects. Okay, that's just my opinion, but a "natural," minimally processed chicken is a very different bird than an "organic" chicken.

## Chicken Fun Facts



- The chicken is a descendant of the Red Junglefowl hybrid. The idea to domesticate Junglefowl originated in the northern parts of India.
- Heard about incubators that are used at poultry farms? Well, the prototype appeared about 4,000 years ago, in Egypt, and could hold 10,000 chicks.
- A poultry farm worker who separates chicks into males and females is known as the 'sexer,' and can separate 1,000 chicks per hour with almost 100% accuracy.
- Chicken is the most popular meat. Americans consume on average about 80 pounds of chicken each year.

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## Chicken Safety Tips



### When You're Shopping

- Always purchase chicken before the expiration date.
- Avoid packages that are damaged, leaking, or coated with frost.
- Bag chicken separately from your other groceries in a plastic shopping bag whenever possible.
- Get your chicken home promptly, and refrigerate immediately.

### When You're Cooking

- Prepare refrigerated chicken within one to two days of purchase.
- Defrost frozen chicken in the refrigerator—never on the counter!
- Never place vegetables or other foods on a board or plate that held raw chicken.
- Wash hands and utensils frequently to prevent spreading bacteria from raw or undercooked chicken.
- Cook chicken to at least 165 °F; Use a meat thermometer or instant read thermometer.

[Click here for more safety information.](#)

### What's the difference between organic and free range?

As stated earlier, organic standards dictate that the chickens be allowed to roam free range, but to be labeled organic also means a whole range of other things. With non-organic free range products, *there are no limits on the amount of birds that can be kept in a coop*. You can have tens of thousands of birds in a coop, and as long as there are some pop-holes for the birds to go outside, they can technically be deemed as free range. That seems a little bit misleading, if you ask me.

Chickens are the direct descendants of “junglefowl” accustomed to being and living in the jungle. They're fairly timid birds, and unless there is tree cover and shelter for them outside in the 'free range' area, they don't really enjoy being outside as their natural instinct tells them that a great, big bird of prey might come in and swoop them up. They actually need to be coaxed to go outside. Organic standards require that the birds be encouraged to go outside by planting the range and making sure there are feed troughs out there, etc.

*Unlike “organic,” there's nothing to ensure that happens under “free range” standards.*

When birds are kept in huge numbers, as can happen with free range, they start displaying strange behavior; e.g., they can start pecking at each other. A way to get around that under free range standards is to clip their beak. Free range farmers trim their birds' beaks so they're not able to injure other birds, but there are animal welfare implications in doing that.

Free range, unlike organic, also means that when you're keeping birds in huge numbers together, they're stressed out and their immune systems are lower, so they're much more susceptible to diseases. As an insurance policy, the farmer might give the birds low doses of antibiotics to ensure that they don't get ill; however, there are some real concerns about the impact of that in human health. For example, we humans have got the MRSA (staph infection) and other antibiotic resistant bugs.

Under organic standards, routine antibiotics are not allowed. There is also a lot of genetically modified (GM) feed coming into this country. Although no GM crops are being grown commercially at the moment, the GM animal feed is coming in through the back door, allowed under free range regulations. *Organic standards ban the use of GM feed.*

### Why are organic foods more expensive?

Prices tend to be higher for organic products for the following reasons: Production costs for organic foods are typically higher because of greater labor input and because farmers don't produce enough of a single product to lower the overall cost significantly. This is true for produce as well as meats and chicken. Additionally, the organic food supply is limited as compared to demand.

Handling of relatively small quantities of organic foods results in higher costs because organic and conventional products must be separated for processing and transportation. Prices of organic food include not only the cost of the food production itself, but also a range of other factors that are not included in the price of conventional food, such as higher standards for animal welfare and environmental enhancement.

### What are the benefits of eating organic chicken?

Eating organic chicken decreases your chances of ingesting the arsenic found in non-organic chicken feed. It also limits your exposure to antibiotic-resistant bacteria caused by the antibiotic overuse. Non-organic chicken farmers frequently use both arsenic and antibiotics to fatten the birds. The antibiotics help combat health problems the chickens have from poor living conditions, according to Consumer Reports, but complicate treatment if you get food poisoning (from salmonella, not arsenic). [Click here for more informations.](#)



## Snap Review: The Sonoma Chicken Coop in Campbell

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My husband and I have been to the Sonoma Chicken Coop in Campbell many times. The best and worst thing I can say about the restaurant is that the food is variable. Sometimes the food, particularly the specials, can be very, very good—not so for all of it. The menu is large, and while much of it is chicken, there is plenty to eat for meat, fish and pizza/pasta lovers. In fact, not long ago the Coop ran a promotion for its burgers and old fashioned milkshakes. The burgers were fine—nothing special—but the shakes were remarkably good, worth a visit in their own right.

There are no servers at the Coop; you order at the register, then pick up your food when your electronic vibrating gizmo goes off. It is a very family-friendly environment with the food on one end and a full bar on the other side.

The Coop makes a good rotisserie chicken, which can be ordered with a variety of sauces and side dishes. However, I've found out that sometimes the chicken sits around too long. I like the lemon and olive oil vinaigrette with capers on my chicken. The coq au vin sauce, however, is a mistake. I could tell you a number of reasons why, but you'll just have to take my word for it. Please trust me—you don't want to order it.

Likewise, the chicken with chipotle chile rub and barbecue sauce disappointed. The chile was virtually undetectable, and the barbecue sauce was generic and overly sweet. Among the side dishes offered are a tasty, grilled half-artichoke and excellent "leaky" mashed potatoes. All entrees seem to come with a piece of soggy pizza regardless of whether or not it is appropriate to the meal. I expect that kids love it.

Besides the Coop's signature rotisserie chicken, the bird also makes an appearance in a variety of salads, sandwiches, grilled and sautéed dishes. Oddly, some of the best dishes I've had at the coop were specials such as pork vindaloo and beef pot roast. Desserts are worth mentioning, if only to say that they are all disappointing, though I haven't had the chocolate fondue. (I don't count the milkshakes as a dessert.)

The menu is priced attractively, so when a dish misses the mark, I don't feel overly put out. I just stop going for a while. Possibly there is a lot of turnover in the kitchen which could account for the hit and miss nature of the restaurant. When a dish is good, I've been known to visit three times in a week because you never know if and when a special will be repeated. I give the restaurant 2 ½ stars.



The Sonoma Chicken Coop in Campbell : 2 ½ Stars out of 5

[See what others have to say about the Sonoma Chicken Coops in Campbell on Yelp.](#)

## The Sonoma Chicken Coop in Campbell



**The Sonoma Chicken Coop**  
Located in Historic Downtown  
Campbell

200 E. Campbell Ave.  
Campbell, CA 95008

(408) 866-2699

[www.SonomaChicken.com](http://www.SonomaChicken.com)



[Click here for directions.](#)

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## Garlic is good for what ails you



Many people love the flavor of garlic. However, it doesn't just taste great, it's actually very good for you. Garlic is used to treat high cholesterol, parasites, respiratory problems, poor digestion, and low energy.

Studies suggest that eating garlic regularly helps lower blood pressure, controls blood sugar and blood cholesterol, and boosts the immune system. Some also believe that garlic reduces the risk of esophageal, stomach, and colon cancer.

In India, however, various Hindu religious sects are known to eschew onions or garlic, as they believe that such pungent flavors "incite passions," which is not to say that they have aphrodisiac powers.

## Chicken with Roasted Garlic, Saffron & Parsley



This recipe is an adaptation of a recipe for chicken wings that was given to me long ago by my dear friend, Denise. It was so good that I simply had to expand it to make a meal of it. I can't say for sure what the origins of this recipe are, but my guess is Spain. Be sure to make some rice, as the sauce is really yummy.

The roasted garlic and saffron marry very well, but be sure not to overdo the saffron, as it has a very strong flavor, which can become overpowering. In this recipe the parsley plays a significant role in terms of flavor, so be sure to use Italian flat-leaf parsley. You can also make a lighter version of the recipe by omitting the flour/egg crust on the chicken and not adding the cream enrichment to the sauce.

## Chicken with Roasted Garlic, Saffron & Parsley

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 4 Boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 Eggs
- ¼ cup half & half
- Flour for dredging
- Salt & pepper
- Olive oil
- ¾ cup peeled garlic cloves
- 10 peppercorns, crushed
- A pinch of saffron threads
- 2 Tbs. Italian parsley, chopped
- 2 Tbs. brandy
- 2 tsp. flour
- ½ cup white wine
- ½ cup chicken broth + additional for adjusting sauce consistency
- 1/2 cup cream (optional)

(Continued on page 7)

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

## Chicken with Roasted Garlic, Saffron & Parsley (Cont.)

### Directions

#### Make the sauce

1. Heat a saucepan with water till boiling. Add the garlic cloves and boil for 1 minute. Drain.
2. Heat 1 Tbs. olive oil in an oven-safe (preferably non-stick) skillet and add the garlic cloves, tossing around until they start to turn color. Transfer to a 325-degree oven for 15-20 minutes till softened and golden. Remove from oven.
3. Add the brandy to the skillet and ignite it, mashing the garlic.
4. Sprinkle in the flour and cook the roux for several minutes.
5. Add half the parsley, saffron and cracked peppercorns, mashing everything to a paste. Stir in the wine and chicken broth, whisking till smooth.
6. Simmer for 10 minutes and then season to taste with salt.
7. Adjust the sauce consistency with additional chicken broth and add cream, if desired.

#### Prepare the chicken

1. Slice the chicken breasts into medallions and pound to an even thickness between two sheets of plastic wrap.
2. Whisk the flour, salt & pepper in a medium bowl; set aside.
3. Whisk together the eggs and half & half in a medium bowl.
4. Place the chicken pieces in the egg mix and let soak for a few minutes. Shake off excess egg and dredge the breasts in the flour; set aside. Do this in batches.
5. Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan, frying pan or skillet till the surface shimmers.
6. Add the chicken medallions to the pan and sauté over medium–medium-high heat till golden brown. Turn over and continue to cook until golden brown and crispy. If necessary, do this in batches. You don't want to overcrowd the pan, or the chicken will steam instead of getting crispy.
7. Remove from the pan and blot gently with paper towels. Serve with sauce and additional chopped parsley for garnish. Serve with rice pilaf to mop up the sauce.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

## Saffron



The most precious and most expensive spice in the world is saffron.

The saffron filaments, or threads, are actually the dried stigmas of the saffron flower, "Crocus Sativus Linneaus."

Each flower contains only three stigmas. These threads must be picked from the flower by hand, and more than 75,000 flowers are needed to produce just one pound of saffron filaments, making it the world's most precious spice.

Saffron is used both for its bright orange-yellow color and for its intense flavor and aroma. Because of saffron's strong coloring power and intense flavor, it should be used sparingly.



Saffron Flower

## To dredge or not to dredge?



I make sautéed chicken breasts frequently, and usually do not dredge the chicken in flour. Dredging the chicken in flour forms a light crust, which is desirable in some recipes, such as this one.

Typically, I choose not to dredge in order to reduce the caloric value of the dish, but it is a nice touch if you don't care about the extra calories.

Sautéing the chicken in a combination of olive oil and butter ensures that the crust will be a nice golden brown; the olive oil helps keep the butter from burning, and for this simple recipe, the butter flavor is a key element.

## Sautéed Chicken Breast with Shallots & Thyme



The following recipe was something that I threw together one night recently when I was feeling tired and wanted to cook something simple. The technique is a classic text book pan sauté with a simple pan sauce—deglazed juices, a touch of wine and vinegar, and fresh thyme, chives and parsley from my kitchen garden. Fresh herbs make all the difference in this simple recipe. My husband loved it.

I served it with glazed baby carrots and sautéed spaghetti squash. And my husband actually ate them! Not only that—he even took seconds! Braised green cabbage with bacon and apples is also an excellent side dish. The following link will take you to a recipe for braised cabbage that is very similar to the one I made (I didn't use a recipe). The chief differences between the recipe from [Stephencooks.com](http://stephencooks.com) and the way I make cabbage, are I begin the process with rendering a few strips of diced bacon, and I use sugar to sweeten instead of jelly: Click here [stephencooks.com/braised-cabbage](http://stephencooks.com/braised-cabbage)

### Sautéed Chicken Breast with Shallots & Thyme

Serves 2

#### Ingredients

- 2 Boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Salt & pepper
- Flour for dredging
- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 Tbs. butter
- 2 Tbs. sliced shallots
- ½ cup white wine
- 1 Tbs. wine vinegar
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 tsp. fresh thyme, chopped
- 2 Tbs. cold butter
- 2 tsp. snipped chives
- 2 tsp. chopped Italian parsley

(Continued on page 9)

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)



## Sautéed Chicken Breast with Shallots & Thyme (Cont.)

### Directions

1. Slice the chicken breasts into two or three roughly equal pieces, depending on how large the breasts are. Pound them lightly between two sheets of plastic wrap, so that they are an even thickness which will cook quickly.
2. Heat a skillet large enough to accommodate all the chicken pieces in one layer. Add the 1 Tbs. each of olive oil and butter to the pan. Tilt the pan to distribute the oil and butter evenly.
3. Sprinkle the chicken liberally with salt and freshly ground pepper. Dredge the chicken in flour, shaking off the excess.

As soon as the butter foam subsides, add the chicken to the pan, skinned side down. Cook the chicken over medium-high heat till lightly browned. Turn over the pieces and continue to cook until the meat bounces back when pressed with a finger.

4. Remove the chicken from the pan and keep warm while you make the sauce. Add the shallots to the pan and sauté them for a minute or so, till softened. Add the wine and vinegar to the pan, scraping up browned bits. Reduce the liquid down to a couple of tablespoons.

5. Add the chicken stock and reduce by half. Add the thyme.

6. Whisk in 2 Tbs. cold butter, bit by bit to emulsify. Whisk in the chives and chopped parsley. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper. Pour sauce over the chicken and serve immediately.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

### Fresh Thyme



I grow thyme in my kitchen garden. There are many different varieties of thyme, but I prefer English thyme or French thyme. Lemon thyme has a distinct citrusy aroma and flavor, which is popular among some chefs, but I, personally, don't care for it.

If you grow thyme (and it is very easy to grow), you may find yourself in abundance of a good thing. You can dry the thyme in small bundles, upside down. But be aware that the flavor of dried thyme is actually stronger than that of fresh thyme, and drying accentuates its sharpness.

You can substitute fresh thyme in any recipe that calls for dry thyme, but you will probably need to double the amount. One teaspoon of dry thyme equals two teaspoons of fresh.

If a recipe calls for fresh thyme, however, do not substitute dry thyme, or if you do, use it very sparingly. Dry thyme is best reserved for soups and stews, while fresh thyme can be used in recipes that don't specify fresh or dry.

## Sun Brand Curry



I'm a big fan of Indian food and curries; however, Indian curries are typically not made with curry powder as we know it, Indians use a masala spice paste customized for each dish.

Curry powder was developed to suit the palates of the British Raj when they left India. Curry-hound that I am I enjoy dishes that are flavored with a robust curry powder such as Sun Brand Madras Curry Powder.

Several years ago, I gave myself a project: to taste-test every single commercial curry powder I could get my hands on, and Sun Brand Madras Curry Powder won, hands down.

It is not an especially hot mixture, but it is nicely spicy, full flavored, and very aromatic. You can find it in the better grocery stores.

## Sautéed Chicken Breast with Apples & Curry Cream



Now that the weather is turning cooler and apples are in season it is the perfect time for this lovely recipe. The creamy sauce is livened with a touch of curry—just enough to season and not bring heat to the dish.

There are many varieties of apple that work well with this dish; it just depends on whether you prefer a sweeter flavor or a more tart taste. Personally, I like Braeburn apples because they have an excellent apple flavor and are a nice balance of sweetness and acidity. Jonathan apples (if you can get them) are also good, as are Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples.

## Sautéed Chicken Breast with Apples & Curry Cream

Serves 2

### Ingredients

- 1 apple, such as Braeburn or Golden Delicious
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 2 Boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Salt & pepper
- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 Tbs. butter
- 2 tsp. finely chopped shallots
- ½ tsp. curry powder
- ¼ cup brandy
- ½ cup chicken broth
- ¾ cup cream
- 2 tsp. chopped Italian parsley, for garnish

(Continued on page 11)

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

## Sautéed Chicken Breast with Apples & Curry Cream (Cont.)

### Directions

1. Peel and core the apple. Slice it into ¼-inch wedges. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 Tbs. butter. When the foam subsides, add the apples and 1 tsp. sugar. Sauté the apple wedges till golden brown (about five minutes). Set aside.
2. Slice the chicken breasts into two or three roughly equal pieces, depending on how large the breasts are. Pound them lightly between two sheets of plastic wrap, so that they are an even thickness which will cook quickly.
3. Heat a skillet large enough to accommodate all the chicken pieces in one layer. Add the 1 Tbs. each of olive oil and butter to the pan.
4. Sprinkle the chicken liberally with salt and freshly ground pepper. Tilt the pan to distribute the oil and butter evenly. As soon as the foam subsides, add the chicken to the pan, skinned side down. Cook the chicken over medium-high heat till lightly browned. Turn over the pieces and continue to cook until the meat bounces back when pressed with a finger.
5. Remove the chicken from the pan and keep warm while you make the sauce. Add the shallots to the pan and sauté them for a minute or so, till softened. Add the curry powder and stir for a moment.
6. Add the brandy to the pan, scraping up browned bits. Reduce the liquid down to a couple of tablespoons.
7. Add the chicken stock and reduce by half. Whisk in the cream and reduce slightly to desired consistency. Season to taste with salt. Pour the sauce over the chicken and serve immediately with the apples arranged decoratively on the plate. Garnish with a bit of chopped parsley.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

### A few of my favorites



It's apple season, and Braeburn apples are one of my favorite varieties for cooking with and eating out of hand because of their vibrant apple flavor and firm texture.

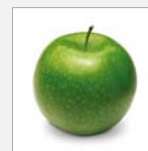
I also like to use other apples, such as Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Jonathan and others. When making apple pie, I use a combination of apples for a great flavor.



Braeburn



Golden Delicious



Granny Smith

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## Fresh Tarragon



Tarragon is a wonderfully aromatic herb, which has a slight flavor of anise. It goes especially well with chicken and seafood.

Although you only use a small bit of tarragon for this recipe, it is worth it to buy, as the flavor of dried tarragon is not nearly as pungent. Fresh herbs can really transform a dish. This is one of those cases.

## Chicken Fricassee with Vinegar & Tarragon



Sometimes I have a sentimental attachment to a dish—this is one of them. My dad, who passed away last year, was always interested in food and cooking. He took a number of cooking classes in the 70's and 80's, and occasionally I was invited to tag along. He was very fond of chef Jacques Pepin, in particular. The following recipe is an adaptation from one of his recipes, Poulet au Vinaigre.

The original recipe called for a whole chicken, cut up, and cooked in two skillets. I make it in one skillet with chicken thighs only and the addition of some shallots. The chicken is first browned, then simmered in a mixture of vinegar and broth till tender. Tomato paste is added and then the sauce is finished with butter and fresh tarragon.

The chicken can be cooked ahead, but the sauce must be finished at the last minute so that the butter does not separate when reheating. The vibrant flavors of vinegar, fresh tarragon and Italian parsley transform the humble chicken into a zesty, mouth-watering dish.

## Chicken Fricassee with Vinegar & Tarragon

Serves 2+

### Ingredients

- 6 chicken thighs with skin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt plus more to taste
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 5 tablespoons (approximate) unsalted butter
- 1/2 cup fine-quality red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 2 shallots, minced
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon

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## Chicken Fricassee with Vinegar & Tarragon (Cont.)

### Directions

1. Season the chicken thighs with salt and pepper.
2. Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add the olive oil and ½ Tbs. butter. As soon as the foam subsides, add the chicken, skin side down, and sear for about 4 minutes, or until golden. Turn and sear the remaining sides for about 4 minutes, or until golden. Remove the chicken from the pan and pour off excess fat, leaving about 1 Tbs. in the pan.
3. Place the garlic and shallots in the skillet and sauté briefly. Add the vinegar and chicken broth to the pan and deglaze, scraping up bits from the bottom. Return the chicken to the pan, cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a serving platter; remove the skin and tent lightly with aluminum foil to keep warm. Do not cover tightly or the chicken may taste slightly reheated.
4. Reduce the sauce by two-thirds. Add the tomato paste, stirring to incorporate. This should thicken the sauce somewhat. Taste and add salt and pepper. This sauce should be quite peppery.
5. Remove the sauce from the heat and begin beating in 3 Tbs. butter a bit at a time. Sprinkle in the chopped parsley and tarragon. Uncover the chicken and pour the sauce over the top. Serve immediately, garnished with additional chopped parsley and tarragon. Garlic mashed potatoes make a great accompaniment.

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### Tip: Remove chicken skin after cooking

I like to remove the skin after braising the chicken—what started off as a beautifully browned, crispy skin becomes flaccid and unappealing after braising.

While the skin helps protect the meat from drying out during cooking, 40% of chicken's calories are found in the skin.

In this recipe, the sauce is finished by whisking butter into the vinegar-tomato reduction—plenty of calories there, but oh so delicious! The sharpness of the vinegar is mellowed out by the sweetness of the butter.

## Ask the Chef



I love hearing from people who have read the newsletter or taken one of my classes.

I enjoy the opportunity to answer your questions in this general forum, and I hope that my advice is helpful.

Please continue to send me your questions, comments and ideas. They really make my day.

Thank you!

**Alyssa**

## Ask the Chef (Q&A)

### Cleaning Grill Grates

*Rebecca asks, "What is the best way to keep my grill grates clean?"*

Reply: The trick to maintaining clean grill grates is to brush them when they're very hot. For a gas grill, the best time to do this is just before grilling. Turn all the burners to high and let the grill heat with the lid down for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the internal grill temperature is around 500 °F. This burns off the residue from the last cookout, making it much easier to brush off with a brass-bristle grill brush (steel bristles are too hard and can damage enamel-coated grates).

For charcoal grills, burn off any residue on the grates right after grilling. Just set the lid on the grill and, as the hot coals burn out, any residue should burn off. Then brush before the next use.

### Using a Food Processor to Chop Onions

*Candice asks, "Whenever I chop onions in a food processor they come out uneven and wet. Is there a better way?"*

Reply: Food processors are great tools, but they don't do everything for you. If you cut up the onions first, in pieces about two inches square or smaller, the machine can handle the load better. Use the pulse button to chop the onions to the desired size without inadvertently pureeing them. Use the chopped onions right away or they will start to juice out and be wet.

### Roasting Potatoes

*Kim asks, "When I'm cooking a roast, I usually cut up some potatoes and put them in the roasting pan. They taste good, but they don't come out crispy. I've experimented with different sizes, but I haven't perfected a method. Do you have any suggestions?"*

Reply: I like to start the potatoes on top of the stove with some olive oil or clarified butter in a non-stick pan. Once the potatoes have started to brown (about 10 minutes), then I transfer them to the oven in the same skillet or transfer them into the hot roasting pan. If you put the potatoes in a cold roasting pan, they will take too long to brown and not get crispy around the edges.

Additionally, don't salt the potatoes until they are almost done. The salt draws out water and inhibits browning. I also like to add a few whole garlic cloves when the potatoes are about half cooked along with some fresh thyme and rosemary.

### Salting Eggplant Draws Out Moisture

*Janelle asks, "Some recipes call for salting eggplant before cooking while others don't. Is it necessary?"*

Reply: Sprinkling salt over eggplant slices before cooking them draws out the vegetable's moisture. It's a process known as "degorging." Larger, older eggplants have brown seeds that contain a bitter liquid.

Salting eggplants removes some of this liquid and improves their flavor; it also helps achieve a firmer texture. In general, it's not necessary to salt smaller eggplants since they have fewer seeds than larger eggplants.