

Quick One Pot Chicken and Rice: Easy Recipe for Dinner Tonight

When 5:00 PM rolls around, the question “What’s for dinner?” can be a source of major stress. You need something fast, something easy, and something everyone will actually eat. This **Quick One Pot Chicken and Rice** is the answer. It is specifically designed to be an easy recipe for dinner tonight, transforming simple pantry staples into a complete, flavorful meal in under 45 minutes. By searing juicy chicken thighs and toasting rice in a rich base of vegetables and spices, you create a delicious, cohesive dish. Best of all, with only one pot, cleanup is almost non-existent.

The Secret to This Quick One Pot Chicken and Rice

Why Chicken Thighs Are Better for Speed

While chicken breasts are lean, boneless, skinless chicken thighs are the superior choice for a quick one-pot meal. Thighs have more fat, which not only equals more flavor but also makes them incredibly forgiving. They resist drying out, allowing you to sear them hard for flavor and then simmer them with the rice without turning tough. This juicy, tender result is achieved easily, making your dinner more delicious with less effort.

Building Flavor with Smoked Paprika

The flavor powerhouse in this quick recipe is smoked paprika. Unlike standard paprika, this spice adds a deep, smoky, and savory element that mimics the taste of food cooked slowly over a fire. When used to season the chicken before searing, it creates a beautiful, flavorful crust. This crust then seasons the entire dish as the rice simmers in the broth, infusing every bite with a complex, savory, and slightly smoky taste that elevates the meal from basic to brilliant.

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- Author: [Aaron recipes](#)
- Total Time: [40 minutes](#)
- Yield: [6 servings 1x](#)

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Description

A fast and flavorful chicken and rice skillet perfect for dinner tonight. This quick one pot meal features juicy chicken thighs, fluffy rice, and a savory sauce seasoned with smoked paprika and herbs, all made in under 45 minutes.

Ingredients

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☐ 1.5 lbs Chicken Thighs (boneless, skinless, cubed) 1 tbsp Olive Oil 1 large Yellow Onion (diced) 2 bell peppers (any color, diced) 3 cloves Garlic (minced) 1 tsp Smoked Paprika 1 tsp Dried Oregano 1.5 cups White Rice (e.g., Basmati) 3 cups Chicken Broth 1/2 cup Heavy Cream (optional, for creaminess) Salt and Black Pepper Fresh Parsley (for garnish)

☐ Cook Mode Prevent your screen from going dark

Instructions

1. Pat chicken thighs dry and season generously with salt, pepper, and smoked paprika. 2. Heat oil in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. Sear the chicken until golden brown on all sides. Remove from the skillet. 3. Add onion and bell peppers to the same skillet. Sauté until softened (5-7 minutes). 4. Add garlic and dried oregano. Cook for 1 minute until fragrant. 5. Stir in the uncooked rice, toasting it for 1-2 minutes. 6. Pour in the chicken broth and bring to a simmer, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom. 7. Return the seared chicken (and any juices) to the skillet. 8. Reduce heat to low, cover tightly, and cook for 15-20 minutes until the rice is tender and the liquid is mostly absorbed. 9. Turn off the heat. If using, stir in the heavy cream. 10. Let the dish rest, covered, for 5-10 minutes. Garnish with fresh parsley before serving.

Notes

Using chicken thighs adds more flavor and moisture, but breasts work too. The heavy cream makes it richer but is optional. Do not lift the lid while the rice is simmering.

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 25 minutes
- Category: Main Course, Dinner
- Method: One Pot, Sautéing, Simmering
- Cuisine: American

Nutrition

- **Serving Size:** 1 serving
- **Calories:** 450
- **Sugar:** 5g
- **Sodium:** 620mg
- **Fat:** 15g
- **Saturated Fat:** 5g
- **Unsaturated Fat:** 9g
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Carbohydrates:** 42g
- **Fiber:** 4g
- **Protein:** 36g
- **Cholesterol:** 85mg

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Essential Ingredients for a Fast and Flavorful Meal

The Vegetable Trio

This recipe uses a hearty trio of yellow onion, bell peppers, and garlic. The onion and bell peppers (any color will do) are sautéed after the chicken, softening and releasing their sugars. This builds the first layer of flavor. The garlic and dried oregano are added last, just for a minute, to bloom their fragrance without burning. This combination provides a savory, aromatic foundation that perfectly complements the smoked paprika and chicken.

The Right Rice and Liquid

For a quick one-pot meal, Basmati or another long-grain white rice is essential. It cooks in about 15-20 minutes and absorbs the liquid while remaining fluffy and distinct. The liquid of choice is chicken broth, not water. The broth provides a savory, seasoned base for the rice to cook in, ensuring that the rice itself is just as flavorful as the chicken. For an optional, richer finish, a splash of heavy cream stirred in at the end adds a luxurious, silky texture to the sauce.

How to Make This Easy Recipe for Dinner Tonight

Searing the Chicken

The first step is to pat your cubed chicken thighs dry. This is crucial for getting a good sear, not just steaming the meat. Season the chicken generously with salt, pepper, and smoked paprika. Heat olive oil in a large, deep skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken and let it cook, undisturbed, until a golden-brown crust forms. Flip and sear the other sides. Once browned,

remove the chicken from the skillet and set it aside.

Cooking the Rice and Chicken Together

In the same skillet, sauté the diced onion and bell peppers until they soften. This scrapes up all the flavorful browned bits (the fond) left by the chicken. Stir in the garlic and oregano, followed by the uncooked rice, toasting it for a minute. Pour in the chicken broth, bring it to a simmer, and then return the seared chicken and all its juices to the pot. Reduce the heat to low, cover the skillet tightly, and let it cook for 15-20 minutes.

Why This Recipe Works: The Flavor Breakdown

The Importance of Searing

Searing the chicken is not just about cooking it; it's about the Maillard reaction. This chemical reaction creates new flavor compounds and a deep brown crust that is essential for the dish's overall taste. Those browned bits left in the pan become the flavor base for the entire meal. Skipping this step and just simmering the chicken will result in a much flatter, less complex, and less appealing dish.

Letting the Dish Rest

After the 15-20 minute cooking time, the rice will be tender and the liquid mostly absorbed. The final, critical step is to turn off the heat and let the dish rest, covered, for 5-10 minutes. This allows the residual steam to finish cooking the rice, resulting in a perfectly fluffy texture. It also gives the flavors time to meld and settle. If you stirred in the optional heavy cream, this rest also allows the sauce to thicken slightly.

Time-Saving Tips for Even Faster Prep

Use Pre-Chopped Vegetables

One of the most time-consuming parts of any recipe is chopping the vegetables. To make this quick one-pot chicken and rice even faster, buy pre-diced onions and bell peppers from the produce section of your grocery store. You can also use pre-minced garlic from a jar. This will cut your preparation time down to almost zero, allowing you to get dinner started immediately.

Rotisserie Chicken Shortcut

If you are extremely short on time, you can skip searing raw chicken entirely. Purchase a pre-cooked rotisserie chicken. Shred or dice the meat and set it aside. Sauté your vegetables and toast the rice as directed. Add the broth, bring to a simmer, and cover. During the last 5 minutes of the rice cooking, stir in the pre-cooked chicken simply to heat it through. You will lose the flavor from the paprika-seared crust, so you may want to add the smoked paprika with the oregano.

What to Serve with Your Chicken and Rice

Simple Side Dish Pairings

This quick one-pot chicken and rice is truly a complete meal. It has protein, carbohydrates, and vegetables all in one. Because it's so hearty and flavorful, it doesn't need much. A simple side salad with a sharp vinaigrette can provide a nice, fresh contrast to the rich, savory dish. Steamed or roasted asparagus or green beans also make excellent, simple companions that add a bit of green to the plate.

Bread for Soaking

The combination of chicken broth, spices, and optional heavy cream creates a delicious, light sauce at the bottom of the pan. The best way to enjoy every last drop is with a side of crusty bread. A good baguette, ciabatta, or even simple garlic toast is perfect for soaking up the savory liquids, ensuring no flavor goes to waste.

Storage and Reheating Instructions

How to Store Leftovers

Allow the chicken and rice to cool to room temperature before transferring it to an airtight container. It will keep well in the refrigerator for up to 4 days. This dish makes for fantastic leftovers, as the flavors continue to meld and deepen overnight. It is an excellent option for meal-prepping lunches for the week.

The Best Way to Reheat

You can easily reheat individual portions in the microwave. Add a splash of water or chicken broth (about 1 tablespoon per serving) to the dish before microwaving. This creates steam and prevents the rice from becoming dry and hard. Cover and heat for 1-2 minutes, or until warmed through. You can also reheat the entire batch in a skillet on the stove over low heat, adding a bit of broth to loosen it up.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I make this with chicken breasts? Yes, you can use chicken breasts. Cut them into 1-inch cubes and sear them as directed, but be very careful not to overcook them during the simmering phase. Chicken thighs are recommended for their moisture and flavor.

Is this recipe spicy? No, this recipe is not spicy. Smoked paprika adds a deep, smoky flavor, but it does not add heat (unless you accidentally buy "hot" smoked paprika). The dish is savory and aromatic, making it very kid-friendly.

My rice is always mushy. What am I doing wrong? The two most likely culprits are too much liquid or stirring the rice while it cooks. First, measure your 1.5 cups of rice and 3 cups of broth precisely. Second, once you cover the pot to simmer, do not lift the lid or stir it. Let the steam do its work undisturbed.

Conclusion

This **Quick One Pot Chicken and Rice** is the perfect solution for a stressful weeknight. It is a genuinely easy recipe for dinner tonight, delivering a comforting, savory, and complete meal with

minimal effort and cleanup. The combination of juicy chicken thighs, smoky paprika, and perfectly cooked rice creates a dish that tastes like it took hours, even though it comes together in under 45 minutes. It is a reliable, delicious recipe that will save your weeknights. While this recipe offers classic comfort, our **one-pot queso chicken and rice** provides a zesty alternative for your next meal.

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