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Published by Clarkson Potter/Publishers, an imprint of Penguin Random House LLC.

italian sheet-pan chicken with bread salad

YIELD: SERVES 4

SERVE WITH: WHITE CHOCOLATE ORZO PUDDING

How do you revamp a classic? Turn all the flavors of a cacciatore into a great tasty marinade, and then roast the marinated chicken on a sheet pan to speed up the cooking time. Marinate the chicken in the morning, and since it only needs 30 minutes in the oven, this is totally doable for a weeknight. I've boosted the seasonings with smoked paprika, which isn't traditional but really amps up the flavor. It's even better served over bread salad (as they do at San Francisco's famed [Zuni Café](#)).

FOR THE CHICKEN

- 1 garlic clove, smashed and peeled
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, toasted (see Cook's Notes)
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked hot paprika
- 3 tablespoons vegetable juice cocktail, such as V8
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 (3-pound) chicken, cut in 6 pieces (see Cook's Notes)

FOR THE BREAD SALAD

- 3 cups diced rustic Italian bread
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 cups freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 small fennel bulb, stalks removed, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves, torn
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Extra-virgin olive oil, as needed

MARINATE THE CHICKEN: Place the garlic, onion powder, fennel seeds, oregano, salt, paprika, vegetable juice, and olive oil in the bowl of a food processor. Puree until it forms a rough paste. Place the chicken pieces in a resealable plastic bag. Add the paste to the bag and rub the marinade all over the chicken pieces. Seal the bag and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 4 hours and up to 8 hours.

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Place one rack in the middle of the oven and another in the top third of the oven. Preheat the oven to 400°F.

Remove the chicken from the bag and arrange the pieces on a rimmed baking sheet. Place in the oven on the middle rack and roast for 30 minutes.

MEANWHILE, PREPARE THE BREAD SALAD: In a large bowl, toss the diced bread cubes with the olive oil and 1/2 cup of the Parmigiano-Reggiano. When the chicken has roasted for 30 minutes, remove the baking sheet from the oven and scatter the bread cubes around the chicken pieces. Return to the oven, this time on the top rack, and cook 15 to 20 minutes longer, or until the bread is toasted and the chicken is golden brown and registers 160°F on an instant-read thermometer. Remove from the oven and let the chicken rest for 10 minutes.

In the same large bowl used for the bread cubes, combine the tomatoes, fennel, basil, lemon juice, the toasted bread cubes, the remaining Parmigiano-Reggiano, and all of the juices from the chicken tray. Add a bit of extra-virgin olive oil, if needed, depending on the amount of juice from the chicken, and toss well. Serve the bread salad alongside the roasted chicken.

COOK'S NOTES: To toast the fennel seeds, place the seeds in a small dry skillet over medium heat. Toast them, stirring often, for 2 to 3 minutes, or until fragrant.

Ask your butcher to cut the chicken into leg, thigh, and breast/wing portions, or substitute an equal weight of chicken parts.

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