

Baked Chicken (Lechon na manok sa hurno)

Serves 4-5

This baked chicken dish is one of Palencia chef Drey Roxas' favorites. The aroma of the lemongrass and pandan leaves baking inside the chicken is intoxicating, and remind him of his childhood. Sometimes, he also likes to use chicken thighs and legs in place of a whole chicken. If you're doing this, lay large pieces of the lemongrass and pandan leaves in a baking dish, then lay the meat on top in a single layer. Bake for 30-45 minutes, until the skin is caramelized and crisp.

- 3 tablespoons light brown sugar**
- 1 cup soy sauce**
- 1 bulb garlic, cloves peeled and minced**
- 1 onion, finely chopped**
- 3 tablespoons calamansi juice or lemon juice (see Note)**
- ½ cup 7 Up or Sprite**
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- One 3-4 pound chicken**
- 2 stalks of lemongrass**
- ½ package pandan or screw-pine leaves (see Note)**

The garnish

Sea salt

Mang tomas or sweet chile sauce (see Note)

Instructions: Mix together the brown sugar, soy sauce, garlic, onion, calamansi or lemon juice, 7Up and black pepper. Pour the marinade over the chicken and marinate for 1-3 hours in the refrigerator.

Preheat oven to 350°.

Remove the chicken from the marinade and blot dry. Stuff the cavity with lemongrass and pandan.

Put chicken on a greased rack, breast side up, and bake for about 1-1½ hours, or until the skin is golden brown and the meat in the thickest part of the thigh registers 160°. (Do not overcook, or the breast will be dry.)

Garnish with sea salt, and serve with mang tomas sauce, or sweet chile sauce

Note: Calamansi is available at Philippine grocery stores. Look for pandan leaves at the Alemany farmers' market or Chinese grocery stores. Mang tomas and sweet chile sauce are available at most Asian grocery stores.

The calories and other nutrients absorbed from marinades vary and are difficult to estimate. Variables include the type of food, marinating time and amount of surface area. Therefore, this recipe contains no analysis.