

# Chicken Marcella

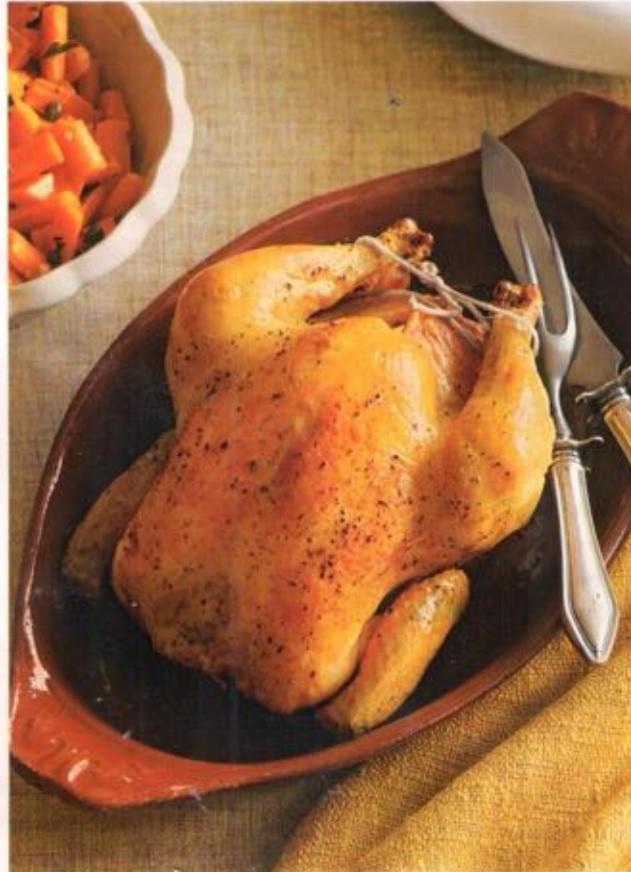
She never cooked before she married and didn't even talk about food—but after trying a few dishes on her husband, Marcella Hazan brought the world simple Italian cuisine **By Victor Hazan**

WHEN MARCELLA became my wife, 53 years ago, she had never done any cooking—nor showed any interest in it. Eating well was my paramount pleasure, but her apparent indifference to what came to the table did not alarm me. We lived with her parents in the Italian seaside town of Cesenatico, on the Adriatic, and they were both excellent cooks.

Not too many months passed, however, before Marcella was at the stove, in a kitchen far from home, in New York City, where we had moved. Neither her mother nor her father was there to help. It was 1955, before e-mail, before inexpensive overseas telephone service. The only purpose of Marcella's rare calls to Italy was to hear the reassuring sound of a beloved voice. It would have been unthinkable to discuss the makings of meat sauce.

Marcella spoke no English at that time. There were no Italian foods in the grocery stores of Forest Hills, the Queens neighborhood where we first lived. For indispensable ingredients such as olive oil, pancetta, or genuine Parmesan cheese, she had to undertake an expedition to Manhattan by subway and bus. I thought about her lifelong indifference to culinary matters; about the years she had spent far from her mother's elbow, earning two graduate degrees in the sciences; about the baffling, uninspiring dishes we now occasionally ate out; about the alien look of the foods in the local Grand Union, the first supermarket she had ever seen. I wondered how she was going to make dinner. It would take a miracle.

When we became acquainted, among the many qualities of mind and body that made Marcella so



Amazingly moist and easy to make, this self-basting chicken will puff up as it cooks if the skin stays unbroken.

pressing on it with the palm of your hand. Puncture each lemon in at least 20 places, using a round toothpick, a trussing needle, or a fork.

5. Place both lemons in the chicken's cavity. Close the opening with toothpicks or a trussing needle and string. Don't make it absolutely airtight—the bird may burst. Tie the legs in their natural position with string.

6. Put the chicken in a roasting pan, breast side down. Place it in the upper third of the oven. After 30 minutes, turn the breast side up. Try not to puncture the skin, but don't worry if you do. The chicken will be just as good.

7. Cook for another 30 to 35 minutes, then increase the heat to 400° F; cook for 20 minutes more. Plan on 20 to 25 minutes of total cooking time per pound. There is no need to turn the chicken again.

8. Bring the bird to the table whole. Leave the lemons in it until the chicken is carved and opened. The juices that run out are perfectly delicious.

## Nutrients per serving

768 calories, 114g protein, 3g carbohydrates, 1g fiber, 30g fat (8g saturated fat), 340mg cholesterol, about 931mg sodium

## Recipe

### ROAST CHICKEN WITH LEMONS

Serves 4

3- to 4-pound chicken

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

2 small lemons

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.

2. Wash the chicken in cold water, inside and out. Remove any fat hanging loose. Let the water drain out and pat the bird dry with a towel.

3. Rub a generous amount of salt and pepper on the chicken, inside and out.

4. Wash and dry the lemons. Soften each by rolling it back and forth on a counter while