

**— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN**

Perfect Poached Chicken Breasts

YIELD Serves 4**TIME** 50 minutes, plus 30 minutes brining

Why This Recipe Works

Poaching can be the best way to gently cook superlean modern chicken breasts, but the standard approach isn't foolproof and offers little in the way of flavor or pizzazz. We took the guesswork out of poaching by starting the chicken breasts in cool water, bringing the pot to 175 degrees over medium heat, and then removing the pot from the heat and cooking entirely with gentle, residual heat. We used lots of water (4 quarts) to ensure plenty of reserve heat, which would do the cooking, and raised the breasts off the bottom of the pot with a steamer basket for even cooking from top to bottom. To up the flavor ante, we added salt, soy sauce, sugar, and garlic to the poaching liquid for meaty, rich-tasting breasts. Finally, to boost tenderness, flavor absorption, and juiciness, we took an unusual approach and brined the breasts directly in the poaching liquid before turning on the heat and cooking them. The result is supertender, juicy chicken breasts that pair well with simple sauces.



Gather Your Ingredients

Before You Begin

- * To ensure that the chicken cooks through, don't use breasts that weigh more than 8 ounces each. If desired,

- ☐ **4** (6- to 8-ounce)
boneless, skinless
chicken breasts, trimmed
- ☐ ½ cup soy sauce, for
brining
- ☐ ¼ cup salt, for brining
- ☐ **2** tablespoons sugar
- ☐ **6** garlic cloves, smashed
and peeled

serve the chicken with one of our sauces (see related content) or in a salad or sandwiches.

Instructions

- 1.** Cover chicken breasts with plastic wrap and pound thick ends gently with meat pounder until ¾ inch thick. Discard plastic wrap. Whisk 4 quarts water, soy sauce, salt, sugar, and garlic in Dutch oven until salt and sugar are dissolved. Arrange breasts, skinned side up, in steamer basket, making sure not to overlap them. Submerge steamer basket in brine and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.
- 2.** Heat pot over medium heat, stirring liquid occasionally to even out hot spots, until water registers 175 degrees, 15 to 20 minutes. Turn off heat, cover pot, remove from burner, and let stand until meat registers 160 degrees, 17 to 22 minutes.
- 3.** Transfer breasts to carving board, cover tightly with aluminum foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. Slice each breast on bias into ¼-inch-thick slices, transfer to serving platter or individual plates, and serve.