



Chicken Caesar Salad

October 12, 2023

A Caesar salad may be your go-to side order, but when you make it at home from scratch, it is infinitely better and becomes the main event. Making Caesar dressing is essentially making a garlic-and-anchovy-spiked mayonnaise with lemon and Parmesan doing the Lord's work. Sounds complicated, but couldn't be simpler! This recipe will make about a cup of dressing. Reserving a third of it provides a tasty double-duty marinade for chicken thighs that keeps them oh-so-moist and easy to cook in your countertop air fryer (or the oven!).

Serves 2-4

Ingredients:

- 3-4 slices of crusty, country sourdough bread, baguette, ciabatta (about 2+ cups), torn into irregular 1-inch pieces
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 garlic clove, grated on microplane-style rasp grater
- 1 lemon, zested and juiced
- 2-4 oil-packed anchovy filets, pat dry
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ cup neutral oil
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese (about 2 ounces), plus more for serving
- 2-4 Romaine hearts, or packages of Little Gems lettuce
- 1.5 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 5-6)
- Kosher salt & freshly ground black pepper

Method:

1. **Make the croutons:** Preheat air fryer to 350°F. Toss in a medium bowl with 2 tablespoons olive oil and 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt until well coated. Place in air fryer basket in an even layer, and cook for 8-9 minutes, until deeply golden brown and crisp (**Alternatively, bake on a rimmed sheet pan in a 350°F oven for 12 to 14 minutes*). Let cool completely.
2. **Make the dressing:** Place egg yolks in a medium bowl. Finely grate garlic clove and the zest of the lemon into the bowl. Squeeze in the juice of half of the lemon. Finely chop 4 anchovies, then mash them to a paste, using the side of a chef's knife until smooth; add to the bowl along with 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard. Whisk everything to combine.

Starting with a very thin stream at first, whisking constantly, incorporate ½ cup of neutral oil into the mixture until it is thick, creamy, and pale yellow.

Once dressing is emulsified, whisk in ¾ teaspoon kosher salt, ½ teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce, and about ¼ cup of grated Parmesan cheese. Transfer most of the dressing to a small bowl, reserving ⅓ cup in the bowl in which you made it.



What's 4 Dinner?

3. **Prepare the chicken:** Add chicken thighs to the bowl with reserved dressing and toss chicken until well coated. Let chicken marinate for 15-30 minutes.

Preheat air fryer to 400°F. Season marinated chicken with additional kosher salt and pepper, and place in an even layer in the air fryer's cooking basket. Cook for 18 minutes, flipping halfway through, if desired. Remove cooked chicken and let rest for 5-10 minutes before slicing.

4. **Assemble the salad:** Tear the leaves of romaine hearts into 2-inch pieces and transfer them to a large salad bowl. Squeeze the juice of the remaining half of the lemon over the lettuce, and season with salt. Toss the leaves to coat. Add $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of dressing around the side of the bowl and toss to coat the lettuce evenly. Add the croutons and gently toss the lettuce (clean hands work well here) until well coated. Is the lettuce too dry? Add more dressing a tablespoon at a time. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup more grated Parmesan cheese and continue tossing. Divide salad among plates and top with sliced chicken, more grated Parmesan, and freshly cracked black pepper.

***Notes**

If you don't have an air fryer, the Caesar-marinated chicken thighs can be roasted on a greased rimmed baking sheet in the oven at 400°F for about 20 minutes, or until the chicken has an internal temperature of 165°F in the thickest piece.