

# COOKING ON DEADLINE: CHICKEN PIRI PIRI

By Katie Workman

**H**ere's the drill with butterflying - or spatchcocking - a bird. You cut the backbone out of the chicken with kitchen shears, then turn the bird over and press down on the breastbone until the bird lies somewhat flat. It's not difficult to do, but a) you need sharp kitchen shears, and b) you have to be comfortable using them on poultry. If either of those things poses a problem, ask the butcher to do it for you (that's what I do).

Why spatchcock a chicken? It cooks more quickly and evenly, and also allows for some nice overall browning. Another somewhat arbitrary reason I discovered is that if you are using all of the racks in your oven, a spatchcocked chicken takes up less headroom. Fun fact. Piri Piri chicken originated in Africa when Portuguese settlers arrived with bird's-eye chili peppers ("piri-piri" means "pepper-pepper" in Swahili).

Here jalapenos are used, which have a more predictable level of heat and are readily available. Four jalapenos may seem like a lot, but once you remove the seeds and ribs and roast the peppers, you will be left with a soft, level, nice, smoky heat, but hardly a tongue-burning level of spiciness. Either use plastic gloves when handling the jalapenos or wash your hands right afterward with plenty of warm water and soap. You only have to touch your eyes or lips once with jalapeno hands to know why. The longer you marinate the chicken, the deeper the flavor. If you don't have hot paprika, you can substitute regular paprika and a couple of generous pinches of cayenne pepper. Serve this chicken with rice, either plain or yellow, and a green salad. Beer would be a great companion. And should there be any leftovers, they make a great chicken salad.

## Ingredients

Serves 4

Start to finish: 3 hours 20 minutes, including 2 hours marinating time, 1 hour cooking time

1 (3 1/2- to 4-pound) chicken

4 jalapeno peppers

1/2 cup olive oil

1/4 cup red vinegar

2 teaspoons hot paprika

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

3 garlic cloves

1 teaspoon salt

## Preparation

If the chicken is already butterflied, move to the next step. If not, cut the backbone out of the chicken with kitchen shears, then turn the bird over and press down on the breastbone until the bird lies somewhat flat. Cut the jalapenos in half, and remove the seeds and stems. Spread the jalapenos on a baking sheet, cut side down. Roast about 15 minutes, until slightly shriveled. Let the jalapenos cool. Combine the jalapenos, oil, vinegar, paprika, oregano, garlic and salt in a food processor or blender until it forms a paste.

Transfer the chicken to a glass or non-reactive dish. Pour the marinade over the chicken and flip it a few times so that the marinade coats the chicken well. Cover and refrigerate for 2 to 12 hours. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F, and let the chicken come to room temperature while the oven heats up. Remove the chicken from the marinade and place it skin-side-up on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast for about 1 hour until the juices run clear when a sharp knife is inserted into the meaty part of the thigh. Let it sit for about 15 minutes on a cutting board, then cut into pieces and serve hot.

