

## Walnut-Crusted Chicken with Chard and Bleu Cheese

Recipe 231 of 365

Stuff a heady mixture of garlic-infused sautéed chard, bleu cheese, and toasted walnuts into chicken breasts, coat them with walnut dust, and pan-sear them, as directed below, or use the same stuffing for pinwheels made from thin-pounded flank steak, for filling a butterflied, rolled pork or beef tenderloin roast, or for hollowed-out Portobello mushrooms.

To make the recipe ahead of time, chill the filling while you prepare the chicken, stuff and coat the chicken, and refrigerate, well wrapped in plastic, up to 4 hours before cooking.

TIME: 40 minutes active time

MAKES: 6 servings

4 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
1 large garlic clove, finely chopped  
1 pound coarsely chopped chard leaves (such as Trader Joe's Chard of Many Colors)  
Salt and freshly ground pepper  
1 cup walnut halves, toasted  
1/2 cup crumbled bleu cheese  
6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

Heat a large skillet over medium heat. When hot, add 2 tablespoons of the olive oil, then the garlic, and cook, stirring, for just a few seconds. Add half the chard, turning it with tongs to coat it with the oil, and cook, turning frequently and adding more chard as it begins to cook down, until all the chard fits in the pan. Season with salt and pepper and cook for about 10 minutes, or until all the chard is completely wilted.

Meanwhile, chop the walnuts. Transfer half of them to a large mixing bowl. Chop the remaining walnuts very, very finely, and set them aside in a small bowl. When the chard is done, transfer it to a cutting board, remove any still-crunchy stem pieces, chop the leaves finely, and add to them mixing bowl, along with the bleu cheese. Stir the chard, walnuts, and cheese together until well blended – this will be the filling for the chicken – and set aside.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Using a small, sharp knife, trim the chicken breasts, and cut each breast almost in half horizontally, so each opens like a book with one long side of the breast holding the two halves together. (Placing the chicken on the board smooth side-down makes it easier to see that both halves of the breast remain intact when you cut them, so that no stuffing will fall out.)

Season the chicken breasts inside and out with salt and pepper, and stuff each with a sixth of the stuffing mixture. Turn the closed, stuffed breasts smooth side-up on a plate, and dust with about half of the remaining finely-chopped walnuts.

Preheat a large skillet over medium-high heat. When hot, add 1 tablespoon of the oil, swirl to coat the pan, then add three of the chicken breasts, nutty side-down. Season the newly exposed sides with half the walnuts left in the bowl. Cook for 4 minutes, or until the chicken releases easily from the pan. Flip the breasts over carefully (try not to lose any stuffing), and cook another 4 minutes on the second side, until browned. Move the chicken to a baking sheet, smooth side-up, and repeat with the remaining tablespoon oil, chicken, and walnuts. Bake the chicken on the middle rack of the oven for an additional 8 to 10 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through. Serve immediately.

*Note: if you have two large, ovenproof skillets, simply cook the chicken in two skillets in one batch, then transfer the skillets to the oven for the last part of the cooking process.*