

Lemon-Chive Chicken Salad with Herbed Mayonnaise

My neighbor recently had what she called her first 49th birthday party. I volunteered to bring chicken salad. I wanted something summery and light and herby, but didn't want to make any presumptions about how gooey guests liked their sandwiches. (Goodness knows there's nothing worse than eating the wrong rank on your mayonnaise scale.) I think I found the ultimate solution: I mixed the chicken up with about half the dressing—a mixture of mayonnaise, plain yogurt, bright lemon zest, and handfuls of herbs from my porch garden—and let people slather the rest on baguette halves, along with tomatoes, avocado slices, and pickled onions, as they assembled their own sandwiches.

Save any extra herbed mayo for bartering; it's worth its weight in gold. (And if you make your own mayonnaise, it'll be worth whatever's more expensive than gold.)

If you're pressed for time, substitute pre-roasted rotisserie chicken (2 large or 3 small) for the chicken breasts.

TIME: 45 minutes

MAKES: About 10 big sandwiches' worth

4 cups chicken broth
3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed
2 cups chopped celery (from 4 big ribs)
3/4 cup golden raisins
2 cups mayonnaise
1/2 cup plain yogurt
Zest and juice of 2 large lemons
1/2 cup finely chopped chives, plus 1/4 cup coarsely chopped chives
1/3 cup finely chopped tarragon
1/3 cup finely chopped parsley, plus 1 cup (loosely packed) coarsely chopped parsley
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 large shallots, finely chopped

Bring the chicken broth to a bare simmer in a wide, shallow pan. Add the chicken breasts, and poach, turning occasionally, until cooked through (about 15 minutes). Transfer chicken to a cutting board to cool. Add the celery and raisins to the hot broth, and let sit for 5 minutes. (This softens the celery a bit and plumps up the raisins.) Strain celery and raisins (reserving broth for another use, if you'd like), and set aside to cool.

In a medium bowl, whisk the mayonnaise, yogurt, lemon zest and juice, 1/2 cup finely chopped chives, tarragon, and 1/3 cup finely chopped parsley until blended. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Shred or chop the chicken, and transfer to a large mixing bowl, along with the celery, raisins, 1/4 cup coarsely chopped chives, 1 cup coarsely chopped parsley, chopped shallot, and 1 cup of the herbed mayonnaise. Mix well, and season to taste with additional salt, pepper, and mayonnaise. Serve on lettuce or in sandwiches, with additional mayonnaise on the side.