

# The Slow-Cooker Marry Me Chicken Planner

*A printable companion: the recipe card, the sauce ratio, timing and the rescue card*

Print this set once and keep it in the drawer beside the slow cooker. It gives you the printable recipe card, the scaled sauce ratio, the timing and temperature charts, the three sauce rescues, a make-ahead timeline and a storage tracker — everything you need at the counter without scrolling back through the article.

## Slow-Cooker Marry Me Chicken

|              |                                          |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>Yield</b> | 4 servings                               |
| <b>Prep</b>  | 15 minutes                               |
| <b>Cook</b>  | 5 to 7 hours on low                      |
| <b>Total</b> | 5 hours 15 minutes to 7 hours 15 minutes |

### Ingredients

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 1 1/2 to 2 lb)
- 1/2 tsp salt, plus 1/2 tsp for the sauce
- 1/2 tsp garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp onion powder
- 1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp salted butter
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- 3 tbsp cornstarch
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1/2 tsp black pepper, for the sauce
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
- 1/2 tsp sweet paprika
- 1/3 cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 1/2 cup freshly grated parmesan
- 6 to 8 fresh basil leaves, chopped

### Instructions

1. Mix 1/2 tsp salt, garlic powder, onion powder and 1/4 tsp black pepper, and season the chicken on both sides.
2. Sear the chicken in olive oil and butter over medium-high heat until golden on both sides, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Do not cook it through. Keep the pan fat.
3. Whisk the broth and cornstarch until smooth and pour into the bottom of a 6-quart slow cooker.

4. Whisk in the garlic, Italian seasoning, 1/2 tsp salt, 1/2 tsp black pepper, red pepper flakes and paprika. Do not add the cream yet.
5. Add the seared chicken, pour the pan fat over it, and spoon the sun-dried tomatoes over each piece.
6. Cover and cook on low 5 to 7 hours, or on high 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours, until the chicken reads 165 F at its thickest point.
7. In the last 30 minutes, stir in the heavy cream and re-cover. Keep the sauce at a bare simmer, never a boil.
8. Lift the chicken out, whisk the parmesan into the sauce, taste and adjust the salt.
9. Return the chicken, spoon the sauce over each piece, scatter with basil and serve.

### Notes

- Add the cream in the last 30 minutes. It is the single most important step.
- Skipping the sear means adding 4 tbsp of melted and cooled butter to the broth so the sauce keeps its body.
- A slow cooker on low runs 190 to 210 F, so the pot cannot tell you when the chicken is done. Start probing at hour five.
- Never let the sauce reach a rolling boil once the cream is in, or it will grain and then split.
- Leftovers keep 3 to 4 days refrigerated, up to 3 months frozen. Reheat gently with a splash of cream.

## Shopping List

| Section | Item                                               | On hand? |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Meat    | Boneless, skinless chicken breasts — 1 1/2 to 2 lb |          |
| Dairy   | Heavy cream — 1 cup                                |          |
| Dairy   | Salted butter — 2 tbsp                             |          |
| Dairy   | Parmesan, a block for grating — 1/2 cup grated     |          |
| Pantry  | Chicken broth — 1 1/2 cups                         |          |
| Pantry  | Cornstarch — 3 tbsp                                |          |
| Pantry  | Olive oil — 2 tbsp                                 |          |
| Pantry  | Sun-dried tomatoes, oil-packed — 1/3 cup drained   |          |
| Pantry  | Garlic — 4 cloves                                  |          |
| Spice   | Italian seasoning — 1 1/2 tsp                      |          |
| Spice   | Sweet paprika — 1/2 tsp                            |          |
| Spice   | Red pepper flakes — 1/2 tsp                        |          |
| Spice   | Garlic powder, onion powder, salt, black pepper    |          |
| Fresh   | Basil — 6 to 8 leaves                              |          |

| Section | Item                                                    | On hand? |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Serving | Rigatoni or rotini — 1 lb, or potatoes, polenta or rice |          |

## The Sauce Ratio, Scaled

The sauce is a cornstarch-thickened broth, enriched with parmesan at the end and finished with cream. Keep the ratio intact and the dish scales cleanly.

| Component               | Per 1 lb chicken | 4 servings (1.5–2 lb) | 8 servings (3–4 lb) |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Chicken broth           | 3/4 cup          | 1 1/2 cups            | 3 cups              |
| Cornstarch              | 1 1/2 tbsp       | 3 tbsp                | 6 tbsp              |
| Heavy cream             | 1/2 cup          | 1 cup                 | 2 cups              |
| Parmesan, finely grated | 1/4 cup          | 1/2 cup               | 1 cup               |
| Sun-dried tomatoes      | 3 tbsp           | 1/3 cup               | 2/3 cup             |
| Garlic, minced          | 2 cloves         | 4 cloves              | 8 cloves            |
| Italian seasoning       | 3/4 tsp          | 1 1/2 tsp             | 1 tbsp              |
| Red pepper flakes       | 1/4 tsp          | 1/2 tsp               | 1 tsp               |
| Salt                    | 1/4 tsp          | 1/2 tsp               | 1 tsp               |
| Black pepper            | 1/4 tsp          | 1/2 tsp               | 1 tsp               |
| Sweet paprika           | 1/4 tsp          | 1/2 tsp               | 1 tsp               |
| Fresh basil             | 3–4 leaves       | 6–8 leaves            | 12–16 leaves        |

*Cornstarch is not a preference you can eyeball. The useful range is about 1 1/2 tablespoons per cup of liquid; below that the sauce never tightens, however long it sits.*

## Timing and Temperature

| Method      | Setting             | Total time           | What to watch                                           |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Slow cooker | Low                 | 5 to 7 hours         | Best texture; add the cream in the last 30 minutes      |
| Slow cooker | High                | 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 hours | Probe at 2 hours; add the cream in the last 20 minutes  |
| Slow cooker | Warm, after cooking | Up to 2 hours        | Holds well; stir once before serving                    |
| Dutch oven  | 325 F, covered      | 1 1/2 to 2 hours     | Closest to a stovetop result                            |
| Skillet     | Medium              | 25 to 30 minutes     | The original method, if you are not using a slow cooker |

| What you are checking       | Pull it at     | Why that number                                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Chicken breast, boneless    | 165 F          | Safe and still juicy; carryover adds a degree or two |
| Chicken thigh, boneless     | 175 to 185 F   | Needs the extra heat to break down connective tissue |
| Pork chops, 1 inch          | 145 F          | They overcook faster than chicken; probe early       |
| The sauce, before the cream | 190 F or above | Cornstarch needs near-boiling liquid to thicken      |

*Start probing at hour five on low, not hour six. Slow cookers vary by twenty degrees or more, and the ones that run hot hit 165 F well before a recipe's printed window closes.*

## Doneness Check

- Chicken reads 165 F at the thickest point, probed from the side.
- The meat slices cleanly and looks moist rather than stringy.
- The sauce coats the back of a spoon and holds a line drawn through it.
- The sauce tastes seasoned, not flat — parmesan and salt adjusted at the end.
- There is no pool of clear fat sitting on the surface.
- The cream is fully incorporated and the sauce looks glossy, not grainy.

## Sauce Rescue Card

Three things go wrong with this sauce. Keep this card within reach and none of them will ruin the pot.

### Too thin

Under-measured cornstarch, or the slurry never came to a simmer. Whisk 1 tbsp cornstarch into 2 tbsp cold water, stir it in, and run the pot on high for 10 minutes.

**Grainy or curdled**

The cream went in early, or the sauce boiled after it went in. With the pot off the heat, whisk in a tablespoon of cold cream or a knob of cold butter. If it has split completely, strain the sauce and rebuild it with fresh cream.

**Greasy**

More fat than the sauce can hold. Skim the surface with a wide spoon, then bind what remains with a cornstarch slurry.

*The one rule that prevents most of this: never let the sauce reach a rolling boil once the cream is in. A bare simmer with the lid on is all it needs.*

**Do-Ahead Timeline**

| When                | What to do                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Up to 1 month ahead | Buy the sun-dried tomatoes and parmesan; grate the parmesan and freeze it in a small bag so it stays dry and fluffy.   |
| Up to 1 week ahead  | Trim the chicken and portion it. Mix the dry seasoning blend and keep it in a labelled jar.                            |
| Night before        | Thaw the chicken fully in the refrigerator if it was frozen. It must never go into the pot frozen.                     |
| Morning of          | Whisk the broth and cornstarch slurry and refrigerate it in a jar. Sear the chicken if you plan to, then load the pot. |
| Last 30 minutes     | Stir in the heavy cream and re-cover. This is the step that decides whether the sauce holds.                           |
| Before serving      | Lift the chicken out, whisk in the parmesan, taste, adjust the salt, and return the chicken to the sauce.              |

**Storage Tracker**

| Batch   | Cooked on | Fridge or freezer | Eat by | Reheat gently |
|---------|-----------|-------------------|--------|---------------|
| Batch 1 |           |                   |        |               |
| Batch 2 |           |                   |        |               |
| Batch 3 |           |                   |        |               |
| Batch 4 |           |                   |        |               |

- Refrigerator: airtight, chicken and sauce together, 3 to 4 days.
- Freezer: cooled, sauce poured over the chicken to cover it, up to 3 months.
- Reheat: stovetop over low with a splash of broth or cream, stirring constantly. Microwave at 50 percent power in short bursts as a second choice.
- Cool it fast before chilling: spread it into a shallow container and refrigerate within about an hour.

## Doubling and Scaling

| Servings | Chicken       | Pot size             | Watch for                                                          |
|----------|---------------|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2        | 1 lb          | 3 to 4 quart         | Halve the sauce ratio; do not crowd the pot                        |
| 4        | 1 1/2 to 2 lb | 6 quart              | The standard batch — this is the printed ratio                     |
| 6        | 2 1/2 to 3 lb | 6 quart              | Near the top of what a 6-quart pot does well                       |
| 8        | 3 to 4 lb     | 6 quart, or two pots | Keep the sauce ratio intact so the sauce stays thick               |
| 10+      | 5 lb and up   | Two 6-quart pots     | Split the sauce evenly; never stack the chicken more than two deep |

## Notes for Next Time

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Write down what you changed and how it went. Slow cookers differ enough from one another that your own notes are worth more than any general recipe.

**Date cooked:** \_\_\_\_\_ | **Setting used:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Date cooked:** \_\_\_\_\_ | **Setting used:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Date cooked:** \_\_\_\_\_ | **Setting used:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Date cooked:** \_\_\_\_\_ | **Setting used:** \_\_\_\_\_

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