

The Slow-Cooker Chicken Planner

A printable companion to Slow-Cooker Chicken, Solved

Print this and keep it on the fridge: the recipe card, the ratio, times and temperatures, a shopping list, the fix cards and a batch-cook log.

Slow-Cooker Shredded Chicken in Pan Sauce

Yield	Serves 4 to 6 (about 5 cups shredded)
Prep	15 minutes
Cook	3 hours on high or 6 hours on low
Total	3 hours 15 minutes on high

Ingredients

- 3 lb bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 6)
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 2 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp light brown sugar
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 4 cloves garlic, smashed and peeled
- 1 tbsp cornstarch
- 2 tbsp cold butter, cut into pieces
- Kosher salt and black pepper

Instructions

1. Pat the thighs dry and season them all over with salt and pepper.
2. Whisk the broth, tomato paste, smoked paprika, brown sugar and soy sauce in the insert until smooth.
3. Add the smashed garlic, then nestle the thighs in a single layer, skin side up. Do not stack them.
4. Cover and cook on low for 6 hours or on high for 3 hours, without lifting the lid.
5. Lift the chicken out. Whisk the cornstarch with 1 tbsp cold water into the liquid and cook on high, uncovered, 5 to 10 minutes, until the sauce coats a spoon.
6. Off the heat, whisk in the cold butter a piece at a time until glossy. Shred the chicken, return it to the sauce, and taste for salt.

Notes

- Bone-in thighs are not negotiable. Boneless breasts dry out and turn stringy.
- Half a cup of broth is plenty for 3 lb of chicken; the pot traps every drop of steam.
- The butter goes in off the heat — boiling it breaks the emulsion and the sauce turns greasy.

The Master Ratio

Think in ratios and you can scale this to any pot without looking anything up. The numbers are per pound of chicken, so a two-pound dinner and a six-pound batch are the same arithmetic.

Component	Per 1 lb	For 3 lb	For 6 lb
Liquid (broth)	2 1/2 tbsp	1/2 cup	1 cup
Tomato paste	2 tsp	2 tbsp	1/4 cup
Smoked paprika	2/3 tsp	2 tsp	4 tsp
Brown sugar	1 tsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp
Soy sauce	1 tsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp
Cornstarch	1 tsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp
Cold butter	2 tsp	2 tbsp	1/4 cup

Scale the seasoning, not the liquid. Double the chicken and you double everything except the broth, which goes up by only half — more meat means more of its own juice.

Shopping List

Section	Item	On hand?
Meat	Bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs — 3 lb (about 6)	
Pantry	Low-sodium chicken broth (1/2 cup)	
Pantry	Tomato paste (2 tbsp)	
Pantry	Smoked paprika (2 tsp)	
Pantry	Light brown sugar (1 tbsp)	
Pantry	Soy sauce (1 tbsp)	
Pantry	Cornstarch (1 tbsp)	
Produce	Garlic (4 cloves)	
Dairy	Cold butter (2 tbsp)	
Pantry	Kosher salt and black pepper	
Optional	Fresh thyme or parsley, for finishing	
Optional	Rice, buns, noodles or potatoes, to serve	

Timing and Temperature

Method	Heat	Time	Best for
Slow cooker, low	190 – 200 F	6 – 7 hours	Setting it before work
Slow cooker, high	200 – 210 F	3 – 3 1/2 hours	A weekend afternoon
Oven, covered Dutch oven	325 F	2 – 2 1/2 hours	When the slow cooker is busy
Pressure cooker	High pressure	15 min + release	A weeknight rescue
From frozen	Low only	7 – 8 hours	Only if it went in frozen solid

Never start from frozen on high. The outside reaches a safe temperature long before the centre does, so the edges overcook while the middle is still cold.

Doneness Check

- A thigh reads 200 to 205 F at the bone on an instant-read thermometer.
- The meat gives way under a fork with no resistance and pulls apart in strands.
- The bone twists freely in its socket when you nudge it.
- The sauce has darkened and reduced slightly around the edges of the pot.
- There is no pink at the bone and no resistance in the thickest part.

When It Goes Wrong: The Fix Cards

Thin, watery sauce	Too much liquid, or the cornstarch never reached a simmer. Take the lid off and cook on high 10 to 15 minutes, or add another teaspoon of cornstarch slurry.
Dry, stringy chicken	Boneless breast, or an hour or two too long. Shred it into the sauce and let it sit 10 minutes; the fat and liquid will rehydrate it.
Flat-tasting sauce	Under-seasoned, or no acid. Add a teaspoon of soy sauce and a squeeze of lemon, then taste again.
Too sweet	Too much brown sugar for the amount of meat. A splash of vinegar or a pinch more salt will pull it back.
Greasy sauce	Butter was boiled in, or the emulsion broke. Skim the fat, then whisk in a teaspoon of cold water off the heat.
Tough at the bone	Not cooked long enough. Return it for another 45 minutes on low; thighs forgive extra time.
One-note flavour	Spices went in without balancing. Finish with fresh herbs, lemon zest or a scatter of scallions.

Six Dinners From One Pot

Version	Change this	Serve it with
Honey BBQ	Swap the soy for 1/3 cup BBQ sauce and add 2 tbsp honey	Soft buns and slaw
Orange sesame	Add 1/4 cup orange juice, zest and 1 tsp sesame oil	Steamed rice and broccoli
Buffalo	Swap the paprika for 1/3 cup buffalo sauce and add 1 tbsp butter	Buns, celery and ranch
Apricot	Add 1/2 cup apricot preserves and a packet of onion soup mix	Rice or egg noodles
Ramen	Double the broth, add ginger, finish with noodles and scallions	A deep bowl and a spoon
Taco	Swap the paprika for cumin and chili powder, skip the butter	Tortillas, lime and cilantro

Storage and Reheating

Method	How	Keeps
Refrigerator	Shredded, in its sauce, in an airtight container	4 days
Freezer, portions	Cooled, in 2-cup portions with sauce, air pressed out	3 months

Method	How	Keeps
Reheat, stovetop	Gentle heat with a splash of broth, covered	5 – 8 minutes
Reheat, microwave	Covered, 50 percent power, stirring once	2 – 3 minutes
Reheat from frozen	Thaw overnight in the fridge, then reheat gently	Never boil it

Batch-Cook Log

Note what you cooked and how it went, so the next batch is better than the last.

Date _____ **Size** _____ **Setting** _____ **Time** _____

Date _____ **Size** _____ **Setting** _____ **Time** _____

Date _____ **Size** _____ **Setting** _____ **Time** _____

Date _____ **Size** _____ **Setting** _____ **Time** _____

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