

Chicken Breasts in Creamy Poblano Sauce

MAKES 4 SERVINGS HANDS-ON TIME: 25 MINUTES TOTAL PREPARATION TIME: 40 TO 45 MINUTES

There's no better introduction to the wonderful world of chiles than the poblano. It's hot, but not too hot, and it boasts a marvelous smoky flavor, besides. In fact, the poblano's role in this recipe is less to make it spicy than to make it tasty. The chicken breast, bland as it is, provides the perfect backdrop for the flavorful ingredients. If you follow the recipe exactly, the chicken should turn out quite tender and juicy.

- 2 medium poblano chiles
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus extra for oiling the poblanos
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 1¼ pounds)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 extra-large onion
- 4 ounces shiitake mushrooms
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano leaves or ½ teaspoon dried
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes
- 2 garlic cloves
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ cup Homemade Chicken Stock (page 10, add preparation time) or canned broth
- 4 ounces ⅓-less-fat cream cheese (Neufchâtel)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1. Preheat the broiler to high. Rub the poblanos with vegetable oil and place them on the broiler pan. Broil them, 4 inches from the heat source, for about 10 minutes, turning several times until they have blackened on all sides. Transfer the poblanos to a medium bowl and cover them with plastic wrap. Set them aside until they are cool enough to handle, then remove and discard the skin and seeds. Finely slice the chiles (about ¾ cup). Reduce the oven temperature to 350°F.
2. Meanwhile, heat 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large ovenproof skillet over high heat until hot. Season the chicken with salt and pepper to taste. Add it to the pan and cook for 2 minutes per side, or until golden. Transfer the chicken to a bowl and set it aside.
3. Slice the onion (about 3 cups). Add the remaining 1 tablespoon vegetable oil to the skillet; reduce the heat to medium. Add the onion and cook for 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until golden.
4. Clean the mushrooms, remove and discard the stems, and coarsely chop the caps (about 2 cups). Chop the oregano (about 1½ teaspoons). Stir the mushrooms, oregano, and a pinch of salt into the onion in the skillet and cook for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Halve the cherry tomatoes (about 1 cup) and add them to the skillet. Press in the garlic (about 2 teaspoons) and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes.

5. Add the white wine and simmer over low heat until reduced by half. Add the chicken stock, sliced poblanos, and cheese; whisk until combined and bring just to a simmer. Return the chicken and any juices from the bowl to the skillet. Cover the skillet tightly with aluminum foil and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the chicken has just cooked through. Season the sauce with salt and pepper to taste and stir in the lemon juice. Transfer the chicken to each of 4 plates and top with the sauce.

what is the best way TO ROAST AND PEEL PEPPERS?

There are a number of ways to roast peppers; all are easy. If you have a gas stove, turn on one burner to a low flame for every four peppers that you want to roast. Arrange the peppers directly on the grate over the flame and use tongs to turn them often until they are blackened on all sides. If you have an electric stove, place a rack 4 inches from your broiler's heat source and preheat the broiler to high. Place the peppers on the rack and char them as directed above. Either method will take 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer the peppers to a bowl, cover it tightly with plastic wrap, and set it aside until the peppers are cool enough to touch. Working over a bowl to catch the juices, quarter each pepper and discard the stem and seeds; pull off and discard the skin and use the peppers as directed in your recipe. Don't rinse the peeled peppers, as that removes some of the flavor. The juices you have caught in the bowl are a delicious addition to soups and sauces.