

Donald's Chicken Pot Pie

Makes:

- 5 x 6"x6", plus 1 x 6"x9" oven proof (optionally also microwave safe), OR:
- 4 x 6"x6" oven proof (optionally also microwave safe) dishes, plus about 4 to 6 x 4" diameter x 2" deep ramekins, oven proof (optionally also microwave safe)

Notes to help prepare in advance:

- peel and quarter (but do not cook) the potatoes a day or two before and keep in water and in a fridge to help save time in making the dishes on cooking day
- trim and chop (but do not cook) the carrots and onions a day or two before and keep in a fridge to help save time in making the dishes on cooking day

Topping:

- 8 lbs potatoes, peeled -- put aside four potatoes for the filling
- 1-1/4 cups milk for mashed potatoes
- 1 Large dollop of margarine
- 2 tsp salt

Filling:

- 4 large boneless and skinless chicken breasts (approximately 2-1/2 lbs, 1,1kg)
- 4 potatoes (approximately 1-1/2 lbs, about 750g)
- Salt and pepper
- 4 medium onions (approximately 1-1/2 lbs) -- cleaned and trimmed
- 3 to 4 carrots -- cleaned and trimmed
- Olive oil
- 1 box 32oz (900mL) of chicken broth / stock
- 2 cups milk for filling
- 1 cup flour

Equipment:

- Large pot (at least 4 quarts)
- Vegetable peeler
- Large skillet or electric frypan
- Skillet for frying chicken breasts
- Stove
- Kitchen knife
- Cutting board
- Measuring cup
- Large spoon for the dollop of margarine
- Potato masher
- Measuring cup
- Fork to mix the milk and flour
- Large serving spoon to distribute filling to dishes
- Stiff plastic spatula to spread the mashed potatoes
- Ovenproof casserole dishes equivalent to above. Microwave safe dishes help cut down on the warming up and browning part
- Freezer bags

Notes to help prepare in advance:

- prepare the potatoes a day before and keep in water and in a fridge to help save time in making the dishes on cooking day
- prepare the carrots and onions a day before and keep in a fridge to help save time in making the dishes on cooking day

Making the dishes

Topping:

- Partly fill a pot with cold water
- Save four potatoes to put aside for the filling
- Peel and quarter potatoes, and keep in the cold water
- Drain the water
- Rinse potatoes in cold water
- Cover potatoes again in clean cold water
- Add 1 tsp salt to the potatoes
- Bring potatoes to a boil
- Boil potatoes for 20 minutes
- Immediately drain boiled potatoes
- Add milk, margarine and 1 tsp salt to taste to the boiled potatoes
- Mash potatoes until smooth
- Cover potatoes and put aside

Filling:

- Pan fry the chicken breasts over medium heat in salt and pepper, occasionally turning (see later).
- While the chicken is cooking:
 - Clean, trim, and coarsely chop carrots.
 - Place chopped carrots in a mixing bowl.
 - Clean, trim, and coarsely chop onions.
 - Place chopped onions in a mixing bowl.
 - Clean and cut potatoes into roughly 1/2 inch cubes.
 - Place potatoes cubes in a mixing bowl.
 - Place chopped vegetables in a large frypan, or an electric skillet.
 - Begin frying the onions, carrots, and potatoes in olive oil until caramelization begins.
 - Add the chicken stock / broth to the frying vegetables.
 - Bring the broth and vegetable mixture to a simmer.
 - Maintain simmering for 20 minutes.
 - When chicken is cooked through (juices run clear) and brown, remove from skillet.
 - Cut cooked chicken into roughly 1/2 inch cubes, and put aside.
 - Add a small amount of water or chicken broth to the hot skillet ("deglazing"), and dissolve the residues in the pan.
 - Add the resulting deglazing liquid to the simmering vegetables.
 - After 20 minutes of simmering vegetables, add the cubed chicken to the simmering vegetables.
 - Add salt and pepper to taste to the simmering vegetables and chicken cubes.
 - Mix two cups milk and one cup flour in a mixing bowl, completely mixing in the flour.
 - Mixing the milk and flour in advance is important; adding the dry flour to the hot vegetables and broth will cause clumping.
 - Add the flour / milk mixture to the vegetables, thoroughly mixing all ingredients; the liquid will thicken quickly.

Building the dishes:

- Spoon the vegetable / chicken / sauce mixture into the baking dishes; fill to about half height.
- Layer the still warm mashed potatoes on top of the vegetable / chicken / sauce mixture.

Freezing

- Place the casseroles in bags and freeze.
 - I find that freezing first helps "marry" the ingredients better for later when being cooked.

Preparation to eat:

- Defrost dish completely.
- Optionally reheat dish in the microwave oven.
- Bake 30 to 60 minutes in oven at 350F.

- Dish will be ready when the sauce layer begins to bubble above the potato layer, and potato layer begins to brown; optionally, use broiler to complete browning the top.