

My Mother's Chicken and Potatoes
Pollo e Patate della Mamma
Lidia Matticchio Bastianich
From the website www.lidiasitaly.com

Ingredients

FOR THE BASIC CHICKEN AND POTATOES:

2-1/2 pounds chicken legs or assorted pieces (bone-in)

½ teaspoon salt or more to taste

½ cup canola oil

1-pound red bliss potatoes, preferably no bigger than 2-inches across

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil or more

2 medium-small onions, peeled and quartered lengthwise

2 short branches of fresh rosemary with plenty of needles

For my special touches- try either or both:

4 to 6 ounces of sliced bacon (5 or 6 slices)

1 or 2 pickled cherry peppers, sweet or hot, or none, or more!-Cut in half and seeded

Rinse the chicken pieces and pat dry with paper towels. Trim off excess skin and all visible fat. Cut the drumsticks from the thighs. If using breast halves, cut into 2 small pieces.

Make the bacon roll-ups: cut the bacon slices in half crosswise and roll each strip into a neat, tight cylinder. Stick a toothpick through the roll to secure it; cut or break the toothpick so only a tiny bit sticks out (allowing the bacon to roll around and cook evenly).

Pour the canola oil into a deep skillet and set over high heat. Sprinkle the chicken with half the salt on all sides. When the oil is very hot, lay the pieces skin side down, an inch or so apart—watch out for oil spatters. Don't crowd the chicken: if necessary, you can fry it in batches, cooking similar pieces together.

Drop the bacon rolls into the oil around the chicken, turning and shifting them often. Let the chicken fry in place for several minutes to brown on the underside, then turn and continue frying until they're golden brown on all sides, 7 to 10 minutes or more. Fry the breast pieces, only for 5 minutes or so, taking them out of the oil as soon as they are golden. Let the bacon rolls cook and get lightly crisp, but not dark. Adjust the heat to maintain steady sizzling and coloring; remove the crisped chicken pieces with tongs to a bowl.

Meanwhile, rinse and dry the potatoes; slice each one through the middle on the axis that gives the largest cut surface, then toss them with the olive oil and the remaining salt in a bowl.

When all the chicken and bacon is cooked and out of the skillet, pour off the frying oil. Return the skillet to medium heat and put in all the potatoes cut side down in a single layer into the hot pan, pouring the olive oil into the skillet with it. Fry and crisp the potatoes for about 4 minutes to form a crust, then move them around the pan, still cut side down, until they're all brown and crisp, 7 minutes or more. Turn them over and fry another 2 minutes to cook and crisp on their rounded skin sides.

Keeping the skillet over medium heat, toss the onion wedges and rosemary branches around the pan, in with the potatoes. Return the chicken pieces—except the breast pieces—to the pan, along with the bacon rolls; pour in any chicken juices that have accumulated. Raise the heat slightly, and carefully turn and tumble the chicken, potatoes, onion (and bacon and/or pepper pieces), so they are coated with pan juices, taking care not to break the potato pieces. Spread everything out in the pan—potatoes on the bottom as much as possible, to keep crisping up—and put on the cover.

Lower the heat to medium and cook for about 7 minutes, shaking the pan occasionally, then uncover and tumble the pieces and potatoes (and bacon rolls) again. Cover and cook another 7 minutes or so, adding the breast pieces at this point. And give everything another tumble. Now cook covered for 10 minutes more.

Remove the cover, turn the pieces again and cook in the open skillet for about 10 minutes to evaporate the moisture and caramelize everything. Taste a bit of potato (or chicken) for salt and sprinkle on more as needed. Turn the pieces now and then—when they are all glistening and golden, and the potatoes are cooked through, remove the skillet from the stove and—as I do at home—bring it right to the table.