

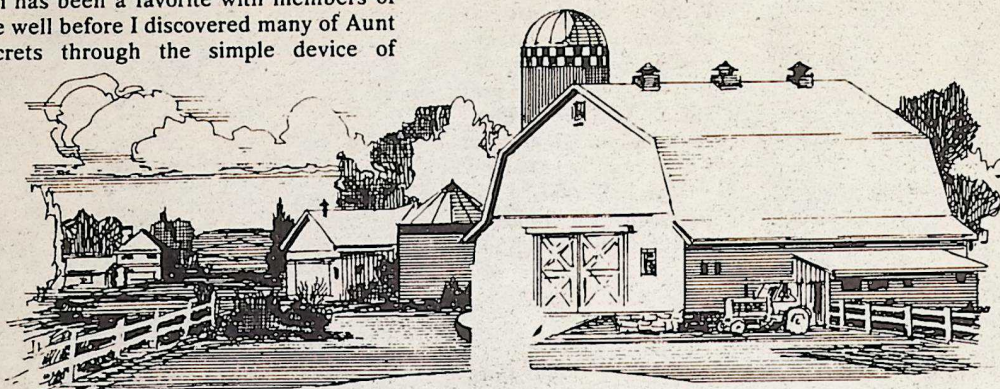
# Adding Spice to Chicken Dinners

August

## From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

by Lydia Lovell

Pan-roasted chicken has been a favorite with members of the Lovell family since well before I discovered many of Aunt Olivia's culinary secrets through the simple device of



watching her every move while she cooked. To prepare a chicken for pan-roasting, Aunt Olivia had to disjoint the critter. Present-day butchering practices allow me to buy chicken parts at the supermarket and to eliminate a distasteful chore. Although the price per pound is higher, I avoid purchasing least-favored chicken parts, can choose only thighs and breasts, and can plan one of each per serving. Then I proceed by borrowing one of Aunt Olivia's seasoning variations.

Chicken marries well with a number of different herbs; the choice of herb depends upon which accompanying dishes are to be served. On her sunny kitchen windowsill, as well as in a corner of the vegetable garden, Aunt Olivia grew her own herbs. I do the same. Parsley, rosemary, lovage, tarragon, oregano, chives, garlic, sage, and mints all grow within reach of my fingertips.

If fluffy white rice will accompany the meal, I like to spice up chicken to balance the blandness of rice. Chop a leafy top of lovage for celery flavor, mince two cloves of garlic, and finely snip three sprigs of parsley. Sauté the herbs three minutes in two tablespoons of margarine. Remove from heat and stir in half-a-cup of dry white wine.

Wash and wipe chicken parts with a paper towel; arrange in an oiled roasting pan, skin side up. Baste meat with half of wine sauce. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and paprika; roast at 350° for 45 minutes to an hour, basting with rest of wine sauce after 30 minutes.

If, on the other hand, baked potatoes are on the menu, I follow Aunt Olivia's example and herb the chicken with rosemary, a pungent evergreen shrub native to Mediterranean shores. After arranging chicken parts in the oiled roasting pan, she placed three whole rosemary leaves on each piece of meat and then poured the juice of half a lemon around the edges of the pan. At 325°, potatoes will bake in an hour-and-a-quarter, so give them a fifteen minute lead, allowing an hour for the chicken.

A third choice gives chicken a completely different flavor, but one just as good. Cut several tender top sprigs from the tarragon plant. Lay them between the chicken pieces. Salt and pepper the meat lightly and baste with dry white wine while roasting. When chicken is tender and its skin crispy, remove from oven and discard tarragon sprigs. Transfer chicken to a warm platter and sprinkle with paprika just before serving. Small boiled potatoes, buttered and dusted with

freshly snipped parsley, are delectable go-togethers with chicken tarragon.

Vegetables to serve with summertime chicken dinners run the gamut from corn-on-the-cob to cucumber and tomato salads. Or fried zucchini and onions. Or little crook-necked yellow squashes boiled just until tender. Or new beets, sweet and tender from the garden.

Any meal will be enhanced if you serve one of Alice's homemade breads. But first let me tell you about Alice and her husband Clell. Alice was native to the State of Maine. A tiny woman, dark-eyed and black-haired, she had a look of an Indian. Possibly a trace of Pequot blood flowed in her veins. Trained as a nurse, Alice had left the wooded hills of Maine for softer climes and, somewhere along the line, had met and married Clell, an Oklahoman. Clell had farmed his acres; Alice had practiced her profession; and the pair had raised a small family, all grown at the time Alice and Clell became neighbors to the Lovells on Cape Cod.

No finer, kinder, more thoughtful and considerate neighbors could the Lovells have hoped for. Nor were Alice and Clell disappointed in their reception from Henry and Olivia Lovell. In his later years, though, Clell found even the Cape's gentle climate too severe, and he and Alice became permanent residents of Florida. While they lived next door, however, the two couples were neighbors, in every sense of the word. Aunt Olivia's recipes include dozens bearing Alice's name. Alice's **Dilly Bread** is especially good with chicken.

1 pkg. active dry yeast	1/4 t. baking soda
1/4 C. lukewarm water	1 unbeaten egg
1 C. cottage cheese	1 T. butter, melted
2 T. sugar	2 1/4 to 2 1/2 C. flour
2 t. dill seed	2 t. minced onion

In a cup, soften yeast in lukewarm water. Combine cottage cheese, sugar, dill seed, salt and onion in a saucepan and heat to lukewarm, stirring. Remove from heat and stir in soda, egg, yeast mixture, and melted butter. Mix in flour to form a stiff dough. Knead on a floured board until smooth and elastic. Place in a greased bowl, turning to oil all surfaces. Cover with a teatowel and let rise in a warm place until double in

bulk. Punch down, form into two loaves, and place in small greased bread pans. Let rise again until double. Bake 35 minutes at 325°. Remove from pans and brush tops with butter and salt. Cool on a wire rack.

Leftovers were never a problem for Aunt Olivia because Uncle Henry liked casserole dishes. He also enjoyed lunches consisting of sandwiches, a glass of milk, and fruit for dessert. To treat my brother and me, sometimes Aunt Olivia made **Chicken Patties**. She and Uncle Henry enjoyed these, too, of course.

2 C. cooked chicken meat	1 t. finely chopped onion
1 beaten egg	3/4 C. soft bread crumbs
1/4 t. dry rosemary	1/4 C. melted butter

Cube chicken meat to about 1/4" dice. Beat egg well, add bread crumbs and toss with onion and rosemary. Stir in chopped chicken and melted butter. Shape into eight patties. In electric frying pan, cook until golden in margarine, about three minutes on each side. Sever openface on Alice's **Dilly Bread**, toasted.

On their farm, Alice and Clell had grown both soy beans and goobers, and her peanut recipes became standbys in the Lovell kitchen. Alice's **Peanut Butter Cookies** vied for popularity with Aunt Olivia's ginger cookies.

1/2 C. butter or margarine	1/2 t. salt
1/2 C. brown sugar	1/2 t. baking soda
1/2 C. granulated sugar	1 1/2 C. sifted flour
1 egg	1/2 t. vanilla
1 C. peanut butter	

Beat butter until soft, add sugars gradually, beating until creamy. Beat in egg, peanut butter, salt and soda. With a fork, stir in flour and vanilla. When well-mixed, roll pieces of dough about the size of a walnut between palms. Place dough balls on greased cookie sheet and press with fork, flattening to about a quarter inch thick. Bake at 350° about 15 minutes. Yield: five dozen.

Alice's **Brown Sugar Peanut Custard Pie** never failed to make a hit when it followed a chicken dinner.

1/2 C. brown sugar	2 1/2 C. scalded milk
1/4 C. granulated sugar	1 C. chopped salted peanuts
1/2 t. salt	a 9-inch unbaked frozen pie shell
4 eggs	
1/2 t. vanilla	

In a large bowl, beat together sugars, salt, eggs and vanilla. Gradually add milk, stirring constantly; then mix in peanuts. Pour into defrosted pie shell. Bake at 425° for 30 minutes or until silver knife blade inserted in custard comes out clean. Cool 30 minutes on wire rack. Chill until serving-time; then top with whipped cream sprinkled with a few chopped salted peanuts for good measure.

Bon appetit.