

Chipotle Cornish Hen on Boston Lettuce with Buttermilk & Chive Dressing

[Inn on the Twenty](#), Jordan

Makes 6 servings

Recommended: [Cave Spring Cellars](#) Pinor Noir

The perfect summer recipe that involves smearing little Cornish hens with a vibrant chipotle-based rub. Chipotle chiles are smoked jalapeño peppers that are usually sold in cans packed in adobo sauce. Make sure to include some of the sauce along with the chipotle itself. This paste would also work well on chicken, pork or salmon. Start by making the salad dressing and the paste. Note: it will be far easier to grill the birds if you flatten them before you apply the paste. Turn the bird breast-side up and press down on it with the palm of your hand. Apply some pressure to break a few of the rib bones. Alternatively, if you have a spit roaster on your barbecue, use it to cook the birds.

For the Salad:

1 cup (250 mL) buttermilk

3 Tbsp (45 mL) chopped fresh chives

¼ tsp (1 mL) chopped fresh cilantro

1 Tbsp (15 mL) liquid honey

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

3 heads Boston lettuce, washed and dried thoroughly

Combine the buttermilk, chives, cilantro, honey, salt and pepper in a small bowl (or a jar with a lid) and blend together well. Refrigerate the dressing for at least an hour. Wash and thoroughly dry the lettuce, wrap in a clean tea towel and refrigerate.

For the Cornish Hens:

1 tsp (5 mL) chopped fresh thyme leaves

2 Tbsp (25 mL) garlic purée

Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

2 Tbsp (25 mL) grapeseed oil

3 Tbsp (45 mL) chipotle chiles

1 tsp (5 mL) chopped fresh chives

¼ tsp (1 mL) chopped fresh sage

6 Cornish hens

Using a mortar and pestle, blend the thyme, garlic, salt, pepper, oil, chipotle, chives and sage together to form a paste. Alternatively, use a food processor or blender and scrape the mixture into a bowl. Rub some of the spice paste well into each of the Cornish hens. Place the hens on a tray and cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 2–3 hours. Remove the hens from the refrigerator 30 minutes before grilling.

Preheat the grill to medium-high. Set a foil drip tray beneath the grill. Cook the hens for 10 minutes and then turn. Continue cooking, turning every 10–15 minutes, for a total of about 40 minutes or until the juices run clear. Let rest for 15 minutes before serving. Arrange the lettuce on a large serving platter (or individual serving plates). Drizzle with salad dressing and arrange the Cornish hens over the salad. Pass round any remaining dressing at the table.