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Chicken Breasts with French Tarragon-Orange Butter and Mashed Potatoes

At the end of the summer, I usually find myself with an abundance of herbs in my garden. One of my favorite ways to preserve them is in compound butters which I then freeze for use throughout the year. This aromatic French tarragon-orange compound butter is perfect to stuff under the skin of chicken breasts while roasting them and makes a sensational pan sauce.

6 tablespoons softened, unsalted butter
Zest of two large oranges, about 3 tablespoons, finely grated
3 tablespoons fresh French tarragon, coarsely chopped
4 plump chicken breasts with skin, bone-in
Nonstick cooking spray
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup shallots, thinly sliced
Juice of two large oranges, freshly squeezed, about 2/3 cup
2 tablespoons honey
4 cups of hot prepared mashed potatoes
4 sprigs of tarragon for garnish

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Line a shallow metal roasting pan with non stick foil.

Place the 6 tablespoons of butter in a small mixing bowl, sprinkle with the orange zest and tarragon. Blend well using a fork or your fingers.

Dry the chicken breasts with paper towels and use your fingers to gently separate the skin from the meat.

For each breast, take one tablespoon of the butter and evenly stuff it under the skin. Reserve the remaining 2 tablespoons of the butter for the sauce.

Place the four breasts, skin side up, in the foil lined pan, spray them lightly with the cooking spray and sprinkle each with a bit of salt and pepper.

Roast for 20-25 minutes or until the thickest part of the breast reaches an internal temperature of 155 degrees and the skin is crispy and golden brown.

Remove the chicken from oven to rest while you make the sauce.

Put 4 tablespoons of the roasting juices from the pan in a small nonstick skillet over medium high heat and sauté the shallots for 3 minutes or until they are a light golden brown.

Add the orange juice and the honey. Boil the mixture for 5 minutes or until it is reduced by 25%.

Add the remaining 2 tablespoons of the reserved tarragon-orange butter and cook for another minute or until the butter is completely melted. Remove the pan from the heat.

On each of four dinner plates, put a cup of the mashed potatoes in the center of the plate and place a chicken breast to one side of it. Drizzle ¼ of the sauce over the chicken, garnish with the tarragon sprigs and serve immediately.

Serves 4.

Victoria Wessler