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## BARBECUED PULLED CHICKEN FOR CHARCOAL GRILL

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*Serves 6 to 8. Published July 1, 2005.*

Chicken leg quarters consist of drumsticks attached to thighs; often also attached are backbone sections that must be trimmed away. Supermarkets may also sell chicken legs, which are chicken leg quarters with the backbone sections already removed; they require less trimming and may weigh less than leg quarters. When trimming the fat from the chicken legs, try to leave the excess skin intact, as it will keep the meat moist on the grill. For equipment, you will need four 3-inch wood chunks (we like hickory or mesquite) and a 16 by 12-inch disposable aluminum roasting pan to catch the fat as the chicken cooks. If you would like to hold the dish once the chicken and sauce are combined and heated through, transfer the mixture to a 13 by 9-inch glass baking dish, cover with foil, and place in a 250-degree oven for up to an hour. Serve the pulled chicken with hamburger rolls or sandwich bread, pickles, and coleslaw.

### INGREDIENTS

#### Chicken

- 8** bone-in, skin-on chicken leg quarters (about 7 pounds total), trimmed of backbone (see illustrations below) and excess fat

Table salt and ground black pepper

#### Sauce

- 1** large onion , peeled and quartered
- 1/4** cup water
- 1 1/2** cups ketchup
- 1 1/2** cups apple cider
- 3** tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 3** tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1/4** cup molasses
- 1/2** teaspoon ground black pepper
- 4** tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1** tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2** medium cloves garlic , minced or pressed through garlic press (about 2 teaspoons)
- 1 1/2** tablespoons chili powder
- 1/2** teaspoon cayenne pepper
- hot pepper sauce , such as Tabasco

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. 1. FOR THE CHICKEN:** Soak four 3-inch wood chunks in cold water to cover for 1 hour; drain.

2. 2. Using large chimney starter, ignite about 4 1/2 quarts charcoal, or about 80 individual briquettes, and burn until fully ignited, about 15 minutes. Empty coals into grill; divide coals in half, creating piles on opposite sides of grill. Place 16 by 12-inch disposable aluminum roasting pan in center, between coal piles. Nestle two soaked wood chunks on top of one pile (reserve remaining wood chunks). Position cooking grate over coals, cover grill, and heat until hot, about 5 minutes; scrape grate clean with grill brush.
3. 3. Meanwhile, sprinkle both sides of chicken legs with salt and pepper. Place chicken legs skin side up in single layer on center of grill over roasting pan. Cover and cook 30 minutes (internal grill temperature should register about 325 degrees after 30 minutes).
4. 4. Working quickly to prevent excess heat loss, remove cover, and, using tongs, rotate each leg so that side facing inward now faces coals; do not flip chicken pieces. Add remaining wood chunks to either pile of coals; cover and cook until instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of thighs registers about 185 degrees, 30 to 40 minutes longer (internal grill temperature should register about 310 degrees). Transfer chicken to cutting board; let rest until cool enough to handle.
5. 5. **FOR THE SAUCE:** While chicken is cooking or cooling, process onion and water in food processor fitted with steel blade until pureed and mixture resembles slush, about 30 seconds. Pass mixture through fine-mesh strainer into liquid measuring cup, pressing on solids with rubber spatula; you should have 3/4 cup strained onion puree. Discard solids in strainer.
6. 6. Whisk onion puree, ketchup, apple cider, Worcestershire, mustard, molasses, pepper, and 3 tablespoons cider vinegar together in medium bowl. Heat oil in large nonreactive saucepan over medium heat until shimmering; add garlic, chili powder, and cayenne and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in ketchup mixture; increase heat to medium-high, bring to boil, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, uncovered, until flavors meld and sauce is slightly thickened, about 15 minutes. You should have scant 4 cups sauce. Transfer about 2 cups sauce to serving bowl; leave remaining sauce in saucepan.
7. 7. Remove and discard skin from chicken legs. Using fingers, pull meat off bones, separating larger pieces (which should fall off bones easily) from smaller, drier pieces into two equal piles.
8. 8. Place smaller chicken pieces in food processor and pulse until just coarsely chopped, three to four 1-second pulses, stirring chicken with rubber spatula after each pulse. Transfer chicken to sauce in saucepan. Using fingers or two forks, pull larger chicken pieces into long shreds and add to saucepan. Stir in remaining tablespoon cider vinegar; cover saucepan and heat chicken over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until heated through, about 10 minutes. Add hot sauce to taste and serve, passing remaining barbecue sauce separately.
9. 9. **BARBECUED PULLED CHICKEN FOR A CROWD:** This technique works well on a charcoal grill but not so well on a gas grill.
10. 10. Follow above recipe, igniting 6 quarts charcoal briquettes, using 12 chicken legs, and slotting them into V-shaped roasting rack set on top of cooking grate over disposable roasting pan (thigh end down, two legs in each slot -- see photo below. Increase cooking time in step 3 to 45 minutes and cooking time in step 4 to 45 to 55 minutes. In step 6, remove only 1 cup of sauce from saucepan. In step 8, process chicken in food processor in 2 batches.

**STEP-BY-STEP**

## Trimming Leg Quarters



1. Carefully grasp leg and bend backbone section to pop joint.



2. Using a sharp boning knife, cut backbone section from leg.



3. Trim away any large pockets of fat.



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