



## A Pot Pie For All Seasons, or at Least This One for Right Now

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I grew up in a poultry-free household. My mother would not cook anything with wings. No Thanksgiving turkey. No chicken except for an occasional bucket of Kentucky Fried, and no chicken pot pies.

I left home for college and was finally able to leave the dorms to live off-campus my senior year. I had a tight budget. I recall my favorite dinners were spaghetti with margarine and boxed Parmesan cheese, and chicken pot pies. The pies were some generic brand and cost about 35 cents each. I remember a pound of margarine and a pack of cigarettes was 35 cents, too. At any rate, I thought the pies were heavenly.

Fast forward to adulthood and marriage. I married a great cook. We roasted and grilled chicken. We had stir-fry. When the kids were big enough to voice their favorites, we added take-out teriyaki to the rotating menu.

I was working full-time, and the kids were in grade school when we hired Jill to clean our house a few times a month. Occasionally she would share a recipe.



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Chicken pot pie came back into my life.

Jill's recipe was a mix of vegetables along with pieces of chicken and her secret binder for the ingredients was a revelation to me at the time — a can of Campbell's cream of chicken soup. Top it with a crust, pop it in the oven. It was heavenly.

Fast-forward to retirement. No kids at home, no work, and my husband and I enjoy more free time experimenting in the kitchen. When I spotted a recipe in the New York Times for modern chicken pot pie my eyes widened. I had decided that using canned soup as a binder should be relegated to the past and was curious about a modern approach.

Well, the key ingredients were bacon fat (the recipe called for six ounces of bacon), flour, chicken stock, and a bit of sherry or Madeira. The filling itself was limited to chicken, onion and mushrooms. I followed the recipe, and we were transported. But my husband and I reconsid-

ered the wisdom of eating it frequently when I made it a second time; we could feel our arteries clogging up. It was time to make some adjustments. Here is our current version.

### Chicken Pot Pie

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ cup chopped onion
- Handful of mushrooms, quartered
- 2 unpeeled new potatoes, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 medium carrot, diced
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- ½ cup frozen peas
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- Salt and ground black pepper
- 1 pound boneless chicken thighs, cut into bite-size pieces
- 2 or 3 tablespoons butter
- 2 ½ cups rich chicken stock
- ¼ cup Madeira or sherry
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley, more for garnish
- 1 9-inch pie crust, chilled, or 1 sheet puff pastry

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400.

Place potato cubes in water, bring to a boil and cook for about 5 minutes, until slightly firm.

Heat oil in a frying pan, add garlic and cook until fragrant. Add onions and cook until soft, add carrots and celery and cook briefly. Set aside.

Mix flour, thyme, paprika and pinches of pepper and salt in a bag or a bowl. Toss chicken to coat.

Add butter to the frying pan and sauté the chicken, adding any remaining flour mixture. Cook until the chicken is golden. Add chicken stock, wine and vinegar. Stir and simmer until thickened.

Stir in the vegetables, add parsley and place in a baking dish, 8-inch square or similar volume.

Top with crust and cut slits.

Bake until bubbling, about 30 minutes.

Let sit for 10 minutes before serving.

This recipe is perfect for leftover rotisserie chicken. Just make a roux with the butter, flour and spices, add the stock, wine and vinegar, and cook until it thickens. Cube the chicken and add it in with the vegetables. ■