

Chicken pot pie

Source: <https://www.recipeasfeeling.com/>

This recipe uses a biscuit topping, but you can also use your favorite pie dough or store-bought puff pastry crust. They're all good. Other modifications you can use include starting with a cooked chicken (leftovers from a roasted chicken work well) instead of a raw one, and using bouillon and water instead of homemade stock, or making stock from the bones of the pre-cooked chicken instead of the whole raw chicken.

This recipe takes a while to make, but there's a lot of downtime too while the stock is cooking or pie is baking. The cooked pie can be cooled and wrapped in foil (I also put plastic wrap outside the foil) and frozen, and reheated in the foil. You can also make the pie filling and topping ahead of time and put both in the refrigerator until you're ready to bake. It easily doubles if you use a larger pan or two small pans.

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS:

For the filling

3 stalks celery, washed and chopped (reserve the tops for the stock)

3 carrots, washed and chopped, plus 2 carrots washed and halved for the stock

1 small onion, diced (optional), plus 1 onion halved for the stock

Optional: 1 cup frozen peas, 1 cup diced raw green beans

Salt and pepper to taste

1 whole raw chicken, innards removed (modification: 1 pre-cooked chicken) – you'll use half for this recipe and can freeze the other half once cooked

1 handful parsley

2 bay leaves

1 large pinch kosher salt

1 tsp. whole peppercorns

Water to cover

For the sauce

½ c. unsalted butter

½ c. all-purpose unbleached flour (such as Bob's Red Mill Organic)

3 c. stock (or bouillon and water)

½ c. whole milk

Optional: splash vermouth or sherry

Salt and pepper to taste

For the biscuit topping

1 c. flour (I used an organic pastry flour but any lower-protein all-purpose will do)
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. Kosher salt
6 tbs. unsalted butter, melted
1 c. milk or buttermilk

EQUIPMENT:

Baking dish (I like to use a square one but pie pans work too; foil ones are great for freezing)
Stock pot
Pan for sauteing the vegetables (I use cast iron)
Small pot for heating the stock and milk
Large saucepan for making the sauce
Whisk
Ladle
Mixing bowl and spatula or wooden spoon

First, make the stock: Place the whole raw chicken (or chicken bones with the meat reserved, if you're using a pre-cooked chicken) in a large stock pot, along with the halved carrots (2), celery tops, halved onion, herbs, salt, and peppercorns. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Skim off any foam that comes to the surface, and reduce the heat to a steady simmer. Cook for 40 minutes to 1 hour (no longer, if you're using raw chicken, or it will get rubbery; if you're just using bones from a pre-cooked chicken, you can simmer 2 hours or longer for more flavor), until the chicken is fully cooked and the legs separate easily from the body. Let the stock cool slightly. Using tongs, pull out the chicken and place in a bowl to cool completely.

When the chicken is cool, shred it, reserving half to freeze if you're just making one pie. Saute the onion, carrots, and celery until they are slightly softened, about 8 minutes. If you're using fresh green beans, add those and saute for a minute or two, and if you're using frozen peas, add those at the end. Transfer to a baking dish along with the shredded chicken.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Heat 3 cups of stock (you can freeze the rest or use for another purpose) and ½ cup milk in a small pan on low heat so that it's warm but not boiling (warming the liquid prevents a lumpy sauce). In a large saucepan, melt ½ cup butter and add ½ flour. Stir with a wooden spoon until it's fragrant and you can see the texture change, a few minutes. Then start adding the stock-milk mixture 1 ladle at a time, whisking constantly, incorporating more liquid as the previously added liquid is absorbed. Adjust the heat as needed to keep it at a steady simmer. When all of the liquid is added, add the optional vermouth or sherry and salt and pepper to taste.

Pour the sauce over the vegetable-chicken mixture in the baking dish.

Now make the topping: Mix together the dry ingredients (flour, baking powder, salt). Mix the melted butter into the milk or buttermilk. Add the wet ingredients to the dry and stir to combine. The mixture should be like thick pancake batter – almost pourable. Don't overmix.

Pour or scoop the topping over the vegetables, chicken, and sauce in the baking dish. It's ok if the topping doesn't completely cover the dish.

Bake about 45 minutes to 1 hour, or until the topping is browned and cracked on top, and you can see the filling bubbling up the sides. Let cool 10 minutes and then serve, or cool completely, wrap, and freeze to reheat another time.