



CHICKEN CACCIATORE

MICHAEL FRANZESE

INTRODUCTION

We had such a great reaction to our Chicken Parmesan that we're back with another one — and this time we're making Chicken Cacciatore. Now let me tell you the difference, because this matters. Chicken Parmesan? That's an Italian-American dish. You go to Italy and ask for Chicken Parmesan, they'll look at you and say Americano and they'll throw you out. They don't make that in Italy. But Chicken Cacciatore? That's a real Italian dish, straight from Italy — I believe from Calabria. No question about it.

I don't know anybody that doesn't like chicken. You can't go wrong with chicken — as long as it's prepared right. I've said this before: I normally don't send things back at a restaurant. A little overcooked, a little undercooked, I'll eat it. But with chicken, if you don't make it right, I'm sending it back. When chicken is dry, when it's not juicy — it's gone. That's why you loved the Chicken Parmesan. It was juicy, it was delicious, and everybody said so.

This dish takes about an hour and fifteen minutes, maybe less, maybe more — you can simmer it as long as you want, it's not going to go bad. That's the beauty of Cacciatore. And like always, we're going to pair it with our wines at the end. Best way to end a meal, I don't care what anybody says.



[Link to the full cooking episode:](#)

INGREDIENTS

- **3 Chicken Legs + 3 Chicken Thighs** — Always bone-in, skin-on. This is Cacciatore. Breast meat doesn't belong here. Scale up or down depending on how many people you're feeding.
- **1 Large Onion** — Cut it up. In Cacciatore, unlike the sauce, you want the onion in there, shredded a little. You get the flavor and the texture.
- **1 Red Bell Pepper + 1 Yellow Bell Pepper** — More for color than anything else. They all taste similar, but the presentation matters. The colored ones cost a little more — worth it.
- **Whole Mushrooms** — I like them whole. You get the full taste of the mushroom that way. Slice them if you prefer, but whole is better.
- **Garlic** — Don't forget the garlic. Important for all of you out there. A few cloves, to your taste.
- **Black Olives (optional)** — I like olives, my family not so much, but I put them in. Black olives. You can use green if you want.
- **1–2 cups Chicken Broth** — Very, very important. This is what keeps the chicken moist and gives it a wonderful flavor. Big part of this dish.
- **Tomato Sauce** — I use Mutti. To me, these tomatoes are the best. You can make the sauce from scratch or buy it ready-made. Today, we're buying it to save time. The tomatoes are more for color than anything here.
- **Olive Oil** — Always olive oil. Sorry, but that's the Italian in me. It's also pretty healthy for you.
- **Black Pepper** — I always cook with black pepper. Season throughout.
- **White Rice (side dish)** — I like to serve this over rice. My family likes it too. You can serve it with anything you want, but rice is the move.



PART 1: THE PREP

The beauty of Cacciatore is that it all cooks in one pot. Get that right and the rest is easy. Start by getting everything cut and ready before you touch the chicken.

1. Cut up the onion — you want it shredded here, not whole like we do in the sauce. You get the flavor and the texture in the dish.
2. Slice or leave the bell peppers in strips. Red and yellow for color — makes the dish look beautiful.
3. Leave the mushrooms whole. Trust me on this one.
4. Have your garlic ready. A few cloves to your taste.
5. Set the chicken legs and thighs aside. You can add more or less depending on how many people you're feeding. The recipe scales.



PART 2: SEAR THE CHICKEN

You're not cooking the chicken through here — you're just getting some color on it. It's going to finish in the sauce. That's what Cacciatore is. Don't rush this step.

1. Heat a thin layer of olive oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat.
2. Add the chicken pieces skin-side down. Don't move them. Let them sit and develop a crust — about 3 to 4 minutes per side.
3. Flip and sear the other side. Just a couple of minutes. You want color, not cooked through.
4. Remove the chicken and set aside. Leave the drippings in the pot — that's flavor.



PART 3: BUILD THE POT

This is where it all comes together. Everything goes into the same pot. Add whatever you like — carrots, peas, celery. This dish is forgiving and it rewards generosity.

1. In the same pot, add the onions, peppers, and garlic. Stir everything around and let it cook for a couple of minutes.
2. Add the mushrooms. Whole. Stir them in.
3. Season with black pepper. To your taste.
4. Nestle the seared chicken pieces back into the pot on top of the vegetables.
5. Pour in the chicken broth — enough to come up about halfway on the chicken. This keeps everything moist and gives the dish its flavor.
6. Add the tomato sauce. It's mainly for color, but it rounds out the broth beautifully.
7. If you're using olives, add them now. Black olives. As many as you like.
8. Stir gently, bring to a light simmer, then reduce heat to low.



PART 3: SIMMER & SERVE

Now you wait. And this is the best part — you can let it go for an hour, hour and a half, even longer on low heat. You're not going to ruin it. You're not going to dry out the chicken. It stays moist in the broth. That's why I love this recipe.

1. Cover and simmer on low heat for at least 45 minutes, up to 1 hour 30 minutes. The longer it simmers, the more the flavors develop.
2. While the Cacciatore simmers, cook your rice according to package directions. Season the water.
3. Check the chicken — it should be fall-off-the-bone tender and the broth should be rich and fragrant.
4. Serve the chicken over a bed of rice. Spoon the sauce and vegetables generously over the top. Don't be shy with it.



MICHAEL'S NOTES

- Total time: About 1 hour to 1 hour 30 minutes. The longest part is just letting it simmer. You can walk away.
- Serves: 3 to 4 people — adjust the number of chicken pieces as needed. The recipe scales without changing anything else.
- Don't rush the sear: That step builds flavor. Give it a few minutes per side and leave it alone.
- The chicken broth is the secret: "This is what keeps the chicken moist. It's going to give it a wonderful flavor." Don't skip it, don't reduce it too much.
- Customize it: Carrots, peas, celery — anything you like goes in here. There's no wrong answer. This is a peasant dish. It's meant to be adaptable.
- Serve over rice: Not pasta this time. Rice soaks up the broth and sauce perfectly. I love rice — don't judge me.



WINE PAIRINGS

Here's how to pair each of those wines with the dish:



White Wine — Michael's Surprise Pick

The white struck me with this one and I wasn't expecting it. It's smooth, it's light, and it cuts right through the richness of the broth and sauce without competing with it. Serve it chilled. "It tastes delicious — and it works well with this."



Areni (Red) — The Classic Call

When there's tomato sauce on the plate, a red is always in the conversation. The Areni is light and smooth — the parent grape of Pinot Noir. Elegant. It lifts the dish instead of overpowering it. Great choice if you want to stay traditional.



Strawberry Wine — The Wild Card

One of Michael's personal favorites in the fruit wine lineup. "For those of you that love strawberries, you're going to love this wine." Serve chilled. Best served at the end as something close to a dessert wine alongside the meal. Like Godfather said — best served cold.

ENJOY!

Be safe. Be healthy. God bless each and every one of you. Enjoy Chicken Cacciatore - straight from Italy - from your favorite mob chef.

