

Scott's Napa Valley Chicken Salad

Ingredients for Dressing:

1 cup mayonnaise
8 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
6-8 tbsp. honey (depends on your desired level of sweetness)
2 tsp. poppy seeds (optional)
1-2 tsp. lemon or orange zest (either one or both)
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Ingredients for Salad:

2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1 cup pecan pieces, toasted
2 cups red seedless grapes (I prefer to use grapes from Whole Foods but anywhere is fine)
3 stalks celery, thinly sliced

Directions for Dressing:

In a bowl, combine mayonnaise, vinegar, honey, poppy seeds, salt and pepper. These ingredient amounts can be adjusted to suit your taste. Refrigerate until ready to dress the salad. This can be prepared up to 2 days ahead.

Directions for Chicken and Assembly:

Preheat oven to 375°. Place the chicken breasts in one layer in a baking dish with ½ cup water. Cover with foil and bake 25 minutes until completely cooked through. Remove cooked chicken breasts from pan, cool at room temperature for 10 minutes, then cover and refrigerate. [I normally do this hours before I need it, or overnight.] When the chicken is cold, dice into bite-size chunks and transfer to a large bowl. Stir in pecans, grapes, celery and dressing.

This recipe can be a salad or be made into a delicious sandwich!

Notes: Another option for cooking chicken breasts is to roast them. Leave the oven temperature as instructed above. Coat the breasts in olive oil and sprinkle kosher salt and ground pepper on both sides and place them on a roasting pan. If the breasts are boneless & skinless, cook for 25-30 minutes. If you have breasts with skin-on and bone-in, you should roast them at 35-40 minutes. The temperature should be near 160°F and it will continue to cook after you remove it from the oven. The safe temperature should be 165°F. I vary the baking and roasting methods when making this. Both will work perfectly in this recipe.