

Dressed for Success

CHICKEN SALAD RETURNS CREAMIER—AND LIGHTER—THAN EVER

BY KATIE WEBSTER

CULINARILY SPEAKING, we all have our moments of triumph. One of mine came when I was still in school and catering a charity tea in my mother's garden. I found, in a popular cookbook, a recipe for chicken salad that called for slathering the chicken in crème fraîche and roasting it; the result was a creamy, moist, incredibly flavorful concoction, which I stuffed into cherry tomatoes. The salad drew raves, but the ultimate compliment came when a vegetarian at the gathering unwittingly popped one into her mouth. "It's time," she declared, "to start eating meat again."

Reliving this glory moment moved me to make that salad again, and it was as good as I had remembered. I had forgotten, however, the amount of fat in the dish, the cup of crème

fraîche for the chicken (the cookbook helpfully advised that I could use heavy cream as a substitute), and the 1/2 cup each of full-fat sour cream and mayonnaise for the dressing. With all that creamy dressing, you couldn't even taste the 1/2 cup of walnuts.

Fortunately, it wasn't hard to bring the recipe up to date. I replaced the crème fraîche with low-sodium

chicken broth, to essentially "poach" the chicken in the oven, keeping it moist and flavorful. Since the oven was on anyway, I toasted the walnuts to bring out their flavor. Chopping them smaller meant they distributed more evenly throughout the salad, so I could cut the quantity while enhancing the nutty flavor and crunch. I substituted reduced-fat sour cream and mayonnaise in the dressing. All that remained was to increase the freshness quotient: upping the celery and adding red grapes did that. This increased the amount of salad, as well, allowing me to feed 8 people with generous 1-cup servings.

The result was just as luxurious as the original. It may not convert any more vegetarians, but...you never know.

Creamy Tarragon Chicken Salad

Healthy **X** Weight Lower **↓** Carbs

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MINUTES | **TOTAL:** 1 3/4 HOURS | **TO MAKE AHEAD:** Bake the chicken (Steps 1-2) and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Cover and refrigerate the salad for up to 1 day; add the nuts just before serving.

Mound this creamy and satisfying chicken salad on a bed of salad greens or scoop onto a soft whole-wheat roll.

- 2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed of fat**
- 1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth**
- 1/3 cup walnuts, chopped**
- 2/3 cup reduced-fat sour cream**

- 1/2 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise**
- 1 tablespoon dried tarragon**
- 1/2 teaspoon salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper**
- 1 1/2 cups diced celery**
- 1 1/2 cups halved red seedless grapes**

1. Preheat oven to 450°F.
2. Arrange chicken in a glass baking dish large enough to hold it in a single layer. Pour broth around the chicken. Bake the chicken until no longer pink in the center and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the breast registers 170°F, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a cutting board until cool enough to handle, then cut into cubes. (Discard broth or save for another use.)
3. Meanwhile, spread walnuts on a baking sheet and toast in the oven until lightly golden and fragrant, about 6 minutes. Let cool.
4. Stir sour cream, mayonnaise, tarragon, salt and pepper together in a large bowl. Add celery, grapes, the chicken and walnuts; stir to coat. Refrigerate until chilled, at least 1 hour.

MAKES 8 SERVINGS, 1 CUP EACH.

PER SERVING: 227 CALORIES; 10 G FAT (3 G SAT, 2 G MONO); 70 MG CHOLESTEROL; 10 G CARBOHYDRATE; 25 G PROTEIN; 1 G FIBER; 357 MG SODIUM; 368 MG POTASSIUM. **NUTRITION BONUS:** Selenium (30% DAILY VALUE).

EW

