

Prep Time	10 minutes
Cook Time	22 minutes
Resting Time	5 minutes
Total Time	37 minutes
Yield	4 servings
Culinary Skill Level	Easy / Beginner
Heat Intensity	Mild (Adjustable)
Cooking Intensity	Medium High (400°F / 200°C)

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Equipment Needed

- Air Fryer (Basket-style or oven-style with a wire rack)
- Digital Meat Thermometer (Essential for accuracy)
- Paper Towels (Critical for skin crispness)
- Mixing Bowl & Tongs

Ingredients

Main Component

- 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (approx. 1.5 to 1.75 lbs total)

Crisp & Flavor Coating

- 1 tablespoon avocado oil (or olive oil with a high smoke point)
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder

- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika (substitute sweet paprika for less smokiness)
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon sea salt (kosher salt works equally well)
- ½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (*optional, for a subtle spicy kick*)

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Prep and Dry the Chicken

Remove the chicken thighs from their packaging. Pat each thigh thoroughly dry on all sides using paper towels. Moisture is the primary enemy of crispness. Removing surface moisture ensures the skin fries rather than steams.

Step 2: Season Generously

In a small bowl, combine the garlic powder, onion powder, smoked paprika, dried oregano, dried thyme, sea salt, black pepper, and optional cayenne pepper. Drizzle the avocado oil over both sides of the chicken thighs. Rub the oil evenly over the meat, ensuring every crevice and the underside of the skin is coated. Sprinkle the spice rub evenly over all surfaces, gently pressing it into the skin so it adheres firmly.

Step 3: Preheat the Air Fryer

Preheat your air fryer to 400°F (200°C) for 3 to 5 minutes. Preheating ensures an immediate sear the moment the chicken hits the basket, locking in moisture and initiating rapid crisping.

Step 4: Load the Basket

Place the seasoned chicken thighs skin-side down in the air fryer basket in a single layer. Ensure there is at least a half-inch space between each thigh to allow maximum airflow. Do not overlap or crowd the basket; cook in batches if necessary.

Step 5: First Stage Cook (Skin-Side Down)

Air fry at 400°F (200°C) for 12 minutes. Cooking skin-side down first allows the rendered fat from the underside to baste the meat while slowly rendering the thick layer under the skin.

Step 6: Flip and Crisp (Skin-Side Up)

Using kitchen tongs, flip the chicken thighs so they are skin-side up. Return to the air fryer and cook at 400°F (200°C) for an additional 8 to 10 minutes. The skin will turn a deep mahogany brown and crisp up significantly.

Step 7: Temperature Verification

Insert a digital meat thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh, taking care not to touch the bone. The target internal temperature is 165°F (74°C) for food safety, though bone-in thighs are best enjoyed when cooked to 175°F–180°F (79°C–82°C) as the connective tissue fully breaks down at this range, yielding exceptionally tender meat without drying out.

Step 8: Rest and Serve

Transfer the chicken thighs to a cutting board or warm platter. Let them rest uncovered for 5 minutes before serving. Resting allows the internal juices to redistribute throughout the meat.

rather than spilling onto the plate.

Chef's Tips for Success

1. **Don't Skip Preheating:** Placing cold chicken into a cold air fryer basket leads to soggy skin because the fat renders slowly before high heat can crisp the exterior.
2. **Space is Key:** Air fryers rely on convective airflow. Overcrowding blocks the hot air, leading to unevenly cooked meat and soft skin.
3. **Bone-In vs. Boneless:** If using boneless, skinless thighs, reduce the total cooking time to 12 to 14 minutes total at 380°F (193°C), flipping halfway through.

Flavor Variations

- **Lemon Herb:** Replace paprika and cayenne with 1 tablespoon fresh lemon zest, 1 teaspoon dried rosemary, and extra garlic powder.
- **Garlic Parmesan:** Mix 2 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese into the spice mixture, brushing with melted garlic butter during the final 2 minutes of cooking.
- **Smoky BBQ:** Dust with your favorite dry BBQ rub before cooking, then brush lightly with warm barbecue sauce during the last 2 minutes.

Storage and Reheating

- Refrigeration: Store cooled leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 4 days.
- Reheating: To regain the original crisp texture, place leftover thighs back in the air fryer at 375°F (190°C) for 4 to 5 minutes until warmed through and crisp. Avoid microwave heating, which makes the skin chewy.

Nutritional Information

Estimated values per serving (based on 1 bone-in, skin-on chicken thigh with rub):

Metric	Amount per Serving
Calories	335 kcal
Total Fat	22 g
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	5.5 g
<i>Trans Fat</i>	0 g
<i>Unsaturated Fat</i>	14.5 g
Cholesterol	135 mg
Sodium	640 mg
Total Carbohydrate	1.5 g
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	0.5 g
<i>Total Sugars</i>	0.2 g
Protein	31 g