

- Prep Time: 20 minutes
- Cook Time: 25 minutes
- Resting Time: 5 minutes
- Total Time: 50 minutes
- Servings: 4 individual stuffed chicken breasts
- Difficulty / Intensity Level: Medium (*Requires simple knife work to pocket the chicken breasts and stove-to-oven skillet management*)

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Equipment Needed

- 12-inch oven-safe skillet (cast iron or heavy stainless steel)
- Sharp chef's knife or utility knife
- Wooden toothpicks (or butcher's twine)
- Meat thermometer / digital instant-read thermometer
- Cutting board

Ingredients

For the Chicken & Seasoning

- 4 large boneless, skinless chicken breasts (approx. 7-8 oz / 200-225g each)
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper

For the Cheesy Vegetable Filling

- 1 tablespoon olive oil (or butter)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 4 cups fresh baby spinach, packed
- 1/2 cup jarred roasted red peppers, drained, patted dry, and finely diced
- 1 cup low-moisture shredded mozzarella cheese (or 4 oz fresh mozzarella, cut into small cubes)
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)

Cooking Intensities & Thermal Guide

Understanding stovetop flame intensity and oven temperature control ensures your chicken cooks through evenly without drying out or burning the cheese filling:

Cooking Phase	Thermal / Flame Intensity	Temperature	Purpose
Spinach Wilting	Medium Heat	~300°F (150°C)	Softens greens and releases excess water without burning garlic.
Sear Phase	Medium-High Heat	Stove Top (~375°F / 190°C surface)	Builds a deeply golden crust and seals juices in 2-3 minutes per side.
Bake Phase	Radiant Heat (Oven)	400°F (200°C)	Gently cooks thick chicken breasts through to an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C).

Step-by-Step Cooking Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Vegetable & Cheese Filling

1. Place a skillet over Medium Heat. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil and minced garlic. Sauté for 30-60 seconds until fragrant (do not let the garlic brown).
2. Add the fresh baby spinach to the skillet in batches. Stir constantly for 2-3 minutes until fully wilted.
3. Remove the spinach from heat and transfer it to a fine-mesh strainer or paper towel-lined plate. Allow it to cool for 3 minutes, then gently press out excess liquid with the back of a spoon. *(Note: Removing excess moisture prevents a soggy filling).*

4. In a small mixing bowl, combine the drained spinach, diced roasted red peppers, shredded mozzarella, grated Parmesan, and a pinch of red pepper flakes. Toss together until uniformly mixed.

Step 2: Slice & Season the Chicken Breasts

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. Pat the chicken breasts thoroughly dry with paper towels. Place one hand flat on top of a chicken breast. Using a sharp knife held parallel to the cutting board, slice horizontally into the thickest edge of the breast to create a pocket. Stop about 1/2-inch before slicing all the way through.
3. In a small ramekin, blend the Italian seasoning, garlic powder, smoked paprika, kosher salt, and black pepper.
4. Rub the spice mixture evenly over the outside and inside cavity of each chicken breast.

Step 3: Stuff & Secure

1. Evenly spoon the spinach, red pepper, and mozzarella mixture into the pocket of each chicken breast (roughly 3 to 4 tablespoons of filling per breast).
2. Fold the top flap of chicken back over the filling. Secure the open seam using 2 to 3 wooden toothpicks inserted diagonally.

Step 4: Sear on the Stovetop

1. Place your 12-inch oven-safe skillet over Medium-High Heat on the stove and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Allow the oil to shimmer.
2. Carefully place the stuffed chicken breasts into the hot pan. Sear undisturbed for 2–3 minutes until a rich, golden crust forms.
3. Gently flip the chicken breasts to sear the second side for another 2 minutes.

Step 5: Transfer to Oven & Bake

1. Carefully transfer the hot skillet directly into the preheated oven at 400°F (200°C).
2. Bake for 15–18 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken meat (avoiding the middle cheese core) registers 165°F (74°C).
3. Remove the skillet from the oven. Let the chicken rest in the skillet for 5 minutes before removing toothpicks and serving.

Chef's Pro-Tips for Success

- **Dry the Peppers & Greens:** Moisture is the enemy of a tight stuffing. Ensure both the spinach and roasted red peppers are well-drained before mixing with mozzarella.

- Don't Overstuff: Resist the temptation to overfill the chicken pockets; filling expands as mozzarella melts and can overflow into the pan.
- Toothpick Reminder: Count how many toothpicks you insert into each piece so you can easily remove them all before serving.

Complete Nutritional Information

Nutrition values are estimates based on 1 individual stuffed breast (1/4 of total recipe).

Nutrient	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value*
Calories	385 kcal	—
Total Fat	17g	22%
Saturated Fat	6.5g	33%
Trans Fat	0g	—
Cholesterol	125mg	42%
Sodium	680mg	30%
Total Carbohydrates	5g	2%
Dietary Fiber	1.5g	5%
Sugars	2g	—
Protein	51g	102%
Vitamin D	0.2mcg	1%
Calcium	240mg	18%
Iron	2.1mg	12%
Potassium	690mg	15%