

Chicken Riggies

Very slightly adapted from [Sip and Feast](#); serves 6

1/4 cup olive oil

1 lb rigatoni

2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs

8 cloves garlic, very roughly chopped into large pieces

2 red bell peppers, sliced

5 pickled hot cherry peppers (like B&G), chopped roughly into 1-inch pieces, seeds and stems removed

1 cup dry white wine (see note)

1 28 ounce can crushed tomatoes (you can also use whole tomatoes, and crush by hand or with kitchen shears)

1 cup heavy cream

1/2 cup grated pecorino cheese

1/4 cup basil or parsley leaves

If you've got the time, salt your chicken up to 24 hours in advance. If you don't just pat them dry and season generously with salt and pepper on both sides.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil; it should taste salty like the sea.

In a dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons of oil over medium heat until it begins to shimmer. Sear the chicken—you'll likely have to work in batches—until cooked through, about 5 to 6 minutes per side. Remove the chicken and set aside.

If your pan is looking a bit dry, add a splash more oil. Add the bell peppers and cook until they brown, about 10 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for 2 more minutes, until it begins to look golden.

Next, add the cherry peppers, cook for 1 minute, then add the wine. Turn heat to medium-high, and cook for 2 or 3 minutes, until the liquid reduces by half. Deglaze the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon, to loosen any remaining delicious brown bits. Drop the pasta into the boiling water, and cook until it's a minute shy of al dente—it should have the bite of a very firm piece of gum.

Add the tomatoes and turn the heat back down to medium. Cook the sauce over a lively simmer for 5 minutes.

Add the cream and mix to incorporate. Chop the chicken into bite-sized pieces. Once the sauce starts to thicken, add the chicken. If you need to, turn the heat down while you wait for the pasta to finish.

Before you drain the pasta, reserve a cup of pasta water. Then drain the pasta and add to the sauce, mixing to coat it. If the mixture feels too thick, add the pasta water a quarter cup at a time. Remember that cream sauces tend to “seize” more than other pasta sauces, meaning that the sauce will thicken and become less liquidy once it’s on your plate. Cook until the pasta is al dente—this should take a minute or three—then turn off the heat.

Add the pecorino and mix to combine, adding another splash of pasta water if you feel the need. Add the basil right before serving, and if you don’t have basil, you can just use parsley. Serve with plenty of fresh cracked black pepper, and a salad if you’re feeling virtuous.

Note: Any time I don’t finish a bottle of wine and it’s begun to turn, I just leave it in the fridge (well sealed) until I need some cooking wine; I used that here, and it was great. Especially if it’s not total swill, and especially if it’s not the leading flavoring agent in your dish, it will be completely fine to cook with for the next month or so. Finishing a bottle of wine can occasionally be a bit of a burden, especially if you live alone. This dish is expensive enough; you don’t always need to buy a new bottle.