Prep Time: 10 minutes (plus optional 30-minute dry brine)
Cook Time: 25–30 minutes
Rest Time: 5 minutes
Total Time: 40–45 minutes
Servings: 4
Difficulty: Easy
Cuisine: American
Method: Air Fryer

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Ingredients

For the Chicken:

- 4 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 6–7 oz / 170–200 g each)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt (or ¾ teaspoon fine salt)
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper (optional, for heat)

Optional Garnish:

- Fresh parsley, chopped
- Lemon wedges

Equipment

- Air fryer (4-quart / 3.8 L or larger)
- Paper towels
- Small mixing bowl
- Tongs
- Instant-read meat thermometer

Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Chicken (10 minutes)

Pat the chicken thighs completely dry with paper towels — this is the single most important step for crispy skin. Moisture is the enemy of crispiness.

In a small bowl, combine the salt, black pepper, smoked paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, thyme, and cayenne. Mix well.

Drizzle the olive oil over the chicken thighs and rub it evenly over both sides. Sprinkle the spice blend generously over all surfaces, pressing it into the skin. For best results, let the seasoned thighs sit uncovered in the refrigerator for 30 minutes (or up to 24 hours) — an optional dry brine that deepens flavor and dries the skin further.

Step 2: Preheat the Air Fryer (3 minutes at 400°F / 200°C)

Preheat your air fryer at 400°F (200°C) for 3 minutes. Preheating ensures immediate, even cooking and helps the skin start crisping right away.

Step 3: First Cook — High Heat (12 minutes at 400°F / 200°C)

Arrange the chicken thighs in a single layer in the air fryer basket, skin-side up. Do not overcrowd — work in batches if necessary. Cook at 400°F (200°C) for 12 minutes.

Intensity note: This is the high-intensity phase — maximum heat to render fat and begin crisping the skin.

Step 4: Flip and Continue (10–12 minutes at 380°F / 193°C)

Using tongs, flip the thighs skin-side down. Reduce the temperature to 380°F (193°C) and cook for 10–12 minutes more, until the internal temperature reaches 175°F (79°C) in the thickest part of the thigh, avoiding the bone.

Intensity note: Medium-high intensity — slightly gentler heat allows the meat to cook through without burning the skin.

Step 5: Final Crisp (3–5 minutes at 400°F / 200°C, skin-side up)

Flip the thighs back to skin-side up. Return to 400°F (200°C) for 3–5 minutes to re-crisp and brown the skin to a deep golden color. Watch closely during this final phase to prevent scorching.

Intensity note: High-intensity finishing blast for maximum crunch.

Step 6: Rest (5 minutes)

Transfer the chicken to a plate or cutting board and let rest 5 minutes. This allows juices to redistribute, keeping the meat moist. Garnish with parsley and serve with lemon wedges.

Time & Temperature Summary Table

Phase	**Temperature**	**Time**	**Intensity**
Preheat	400°F / 200°C	3 min	High
First cook (skin up)	400°F / 200°C	12 min	High
Flip (skin down)	380°F / 193°C	10–12 min	Medium-High
Final crisp (skin up)	400°F / 200°C	3–5 min	High
Rest	—	5 min	None

Total active cook time: 25–30 minutes

Cook’s Tips

- Dry skin = crispy skin. Pat thoroughly dry and consider the optional dry brine.
- Don’t overcrowd. Air needs to circulate freely; cook in batches if needed.

- Use a thermometer. 175°F (79°C) is ideal for thighs — more tender than the 165°F minimum.
- Adjust for size. Large thighs (8 oz+) may need 5 extra minutes; small ones may need less.
- No flipping? You can skip flipping and cook skin-side up at 400°F for 25–28 minutes, but flipping yields crispier skin on both sides and more even cooking.
- Reheating: Reheat at 350°F (175°C) for 5–6 minutes to restore crispiness.

Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Based on 1 chicken thigh with skin, without optional garnish. Values are estimates and vary by thigh size and brand.

Nutrient	**Amount**
Calories	320 kcal
Total Fat	22 g
— Saturated Fat	6 g
— Trans Fat	0 g
Cholesterol	130 mg
Sodium	480 mg
Total Carbohydrates	1 g
— Dietary Fiber	0 g
— Total Sugars	0 g
Protein	28 g
Vitamin D	0.2 mcg

Nutrient	Amount
Calcium	15 mg
Iron	1.2 mg
Potassium	300 mg