

APRICOT CHICKEN WITH ALMONDS

4 (6- oz) skinless boneless chicken breast halves
5/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
1/3 cup sliced almonds
1/2 cup GOOD EATS apricot preserves
1 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Put oven rack in lower third of oven and preheat oven to 400°F. Lightly oil a 13- by 9-inch flameproof baking dish (not glass). Pat chicken dry and sprinkle all over with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper total, then arrange at least 1/4 inch apart in baking dish. Bake 10 minutes. While chicken bakes, toast almonds in a small baking pan in oven, stirring twice, until golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Meanwhile, cook apricot preserves, soy sauce, mustard, butter, and remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in a small saucepan over moderate heat, stirring, until preserves are melted. Pour sauce over chicken and continue to bake until chicken is just cooked through, about 10 minutes more.

Turn on broiler and broil chicken 4 to 5 inches from heat, basting once, until chicken is glazed and browned in spots, about 3 minutes. Serve sprinkled with almonds.