

White Balsamic Pomegranate-Glazed Cornish Game Hens

Grandeur Hospitality by Chef Dom

Servings: 2–4

Prep Time: 30 minutes (plus overnight brine)

Cook Time: 60–75 minutes

Dry Brine (Overnight)

- 2 Cornish game hens (1½–2 lb each)
- 2½ teaspoons kosher salt per bird (approximately 1½% of total bird weight)
- 1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme or rosemary

Pat hens dry with paper towels.

Combine the salt and seasonings in a small bowl.

Sprinkle evenly over all surfaces and inside the cavities.

Place hens on a wire rack set over a sheet pan and refrigerate, uncovered, for 8–24 hours.

Do not rinse before roasting. If condensation forms, pat lightly with a paper towel.

Aromatic Rub (Applied Before Roasting)

- 2 tablespoons olive oil or melted butter
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon honey or maple syrup (optional)
- Freshly cracked black pepper, to taste

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl.

Rub or brush lightly over hens before roasting, including under the breast skin where possible.

Do not add extra salt; the dry brine provides full seasoning.

White Balsamic Pomegranate-Orange Glaze

- 1 cup pomegranate molasses
- 4 tablespoons fresh orange juice

- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest (optional)
- 2 tablespoons white balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

In a small saucepan, combine pomegranate molasses, orange juice, zest, white balsamic, Dijon, and honey.

Bring to a gentle simmer over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally.

Reduce for 5–7 minutes, until slightly thickened and syrupy.

Remove from heat and whisk in the butter until smooth and glossy.

Reserve half of the glaze for final brushing or plating drizzle.

Roasting Method (325°F Low-Temp with High-Heat Finish)

Preheat oven to 325°F (163°C).

Arrange hens breast-side up on a wire rack over a roasting pan or atop aromatics such as shallots, garlic, and sliced oranges.

Roast uncovered for 50–60 minutes, basting once with pan juices or a small amount of melted butter.

When the breast reaches 150–155°F, brush lightly with the glaze.

Increase oven temperature to 475°F (246°C) and continue roasting for 10–15 minutes, brushing with additional glaze as the skin caramelizes.

Remove when the breast registers 160–165°F and thighs reach 175°F.

Rest hens for 10 minutes before serving.

Brush once more with warm glaze and serve with reserved sauce as desired.

Alternative Spatchcock Method

Using kitchen shears, cut along both sides of the backbone and remove it.

Turn the bird breast-side up and press firmly to flatten.

Proceed with the dry brine and aromatic rub as directed above.

Roast at 325°F for 35–45 minutes, then increase to 475°F for 8–10 minutes to finish.

Internal temperatures remain the same: 165°F for the breast, 175°F for the thighs.

Chef Dominic McCord