

Roasted Cornish Hens with Apricot Glaze

Your knife will sink right thru these tender, juicy and fragrant hens; a beautiful centerpiece dish for any occasion.

Ingredients

4-6 Cornish Hens, about 1 ½ pounds each
2 tablespoons Garlic, finely minced, about 6 large cloves
1 ½ teaspoons Cinnamon
1 ½ teaspoons Cumin
1 ½ teaspoons Coriander
8 tablespoons Unsalted Butter, Melted (8 tablespoons Walnut Oil may be substituted)
1 cup + additional Low Sodium Chicken Broth
Freshly Ground Sea Salt and Black Pepper

Apricot Glaze

3 tablespoons Unsalted Butter
¼ cup + 2 tablespoons Shallots, finely minced (about 2 large shallots)
¾ cups Dry White Wine (Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc recommended)
¾ cup Low Sodium Chicken Broth
1 cup Apricot Preserves
Freshly Ground Sea Salt and Black Pepper to taste

Orange Peel Brine (Optional)

1 ½ gallons Water
1 cup Kosher Salt
½ cup Granulated Sugar
Orange Peels from 2 Oranges
Ice Cubes

Special Equipment: 2 Turkey sized oven bags (If Brining), Kitchen String, Large Roasting Pan

Preparation

Brine Hens: Bring water, kosher salt, sugar and orange peels to a boil, stirring until salt and sugar dissolve. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. To speed cooling process, add ice cubes and refrigerate until completely cooled. Place 1 oven bag into second bag slightly folding over edges to prevent spilling. Place in a large deep bowl. Place hens breast side down into bag, pour brine (with orange peels) into bag until hens are covered. Press out any air and seal bag. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours. Remove hens from brine. Rinse hens inside and out with cold water and pat until dry with paper towels.

Preheat oven to 450 degrees with rack in center.

Place hens in roasting pan breast side up and tie legs together with kitchen string. Lightly sprinkle skins and cavities with sea salt and fresh ground pepper.

Mix garlic, cinnamon, cumin, coriander and 8 tablespoons melted butter in a small bowl. Rub mixture all over skins and cavities, running fingers gently under skins to spread mixture underneath. Tuck wing tips under and place in oven for 15 minutes. Reduce temperature to 400 degrees, add 1 cup Chicken broth to roasting pan and roast 30 minutes longer, basting occasionally adding additional chicken broth if needed.

Prepare Apricot Glaze While Hens are Cooking: Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a small sauce pan. Add shallots and sauté until softened, about 2-3 minutes. Stir in wine and chicken broth and bring to a boil until reduced to half, (¾ cup) about 10 minutes. Stir in apricot preserves and simmer until thickened, about 5 minutes longer. Season with freshly ground sea salt and black pepper to taste. Set aside.

Remove hens from oven and generously brush apricot glaze all over hens, reserving a small amount for later use. Place hens back in the oven and roast until golden and juices run clear, about 15-20 minutes longer, basting occasionally. Remove from oven and brush with any leftover glaze. Transfer to a platter and garnish with fresh rosemary sprigs.

*Hens may be brined, drained, rinsed, patted dry and refrigerated up to one day ahead. Skins will also be crisper if refrigerated after brine.