

CHICKEN MARBELLA

Elena Hickman

This was the first main-course dish to be offered at The SilverPalate, and the distinctive colors and flavors of the prunes, olives and capers have kept it a favorite for years. It's good hot or at room temperature.

When prepared with small drumsticks and wings, it makes a delicious hors d'oeuvre.

The overnight marination is essential to the moistness of the finished product: the chicken keeps and improves over several days of refrigeration; it travels well and makes excellent picnic fare.

Since Chicken Marbella is such a spectacular party dish, we give quantities to serve 10 to 12 but the recipe can successfully be divided to make a smaller amount if you wish.

4 chickens, 2 1/2 pounds each, quartered
1 head of garlic, peeled and finely pureed
1/4 cup dried oregano
coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/2 cup red wine vinegar
1/2 cup olive oil
1 cup pitted prunes
1/2 cup pitted Spanish green olives
1/2 cup capers with a bit of juice
6 bay leaves
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup white wine
1/4 cup Italian parsley or fresh coriander (cilantro), finely chopped

1. In a large bowl combine chicken quarters, garlic, oregano, pepper and coarse salt to taste, vinegar, olive oil, prunes, olives, capers and juice, and bay leaves. Cover and let marinate, refrigerated, overnight.

2. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

3. Arrange chicken in a single layer in one or two large, shallow baking pans and spoon marinade over evenly. Sprinkle chicken pieces with brown sugar and pour white wine around them.

4. Bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, basting frequently with pan juices. Chicken is done when thigh pieces, pricked with a fork at their thickest, yield clear yellow (rather than pink) juice.

5. With a slotted spoon transfer chicken, prunes, olives and capers to a serving platter. Moisten with a spoonful of pan juices and sprinkle generously with parsley or cilantro. Pass remaining pan juices in a sauceboat.

6. To serve chicken Marbella cold, cool to room temperature in cooking juices before transferring to a serving platter. If chicken has been covered and refrigerated, allow it to return to room temperature before serving. Spoon some of the reserved juice over chicken.

16 pieces, 10 or more portions