

Pomegranate-Infused Turkey Braise

Makes 6 servings
Preparation time: 45 minutes
Cooking time: 6 hours 10 minutes

1 turkey (10–12 pounds), butterflied (backbone removed)

DUSTING

Mixture of 1 tablespoon sea salt, 1 teaspoon pepper, and 1 teaspoon turmeric

SAUCE

3 tablespoons oil, butter, or ghee*
2 large yellow onions, peeled and finely diced
10 cloves garlic, peeled
1 cup raw walnuts or pistachios
4 cups pomegranate juice
½ cup pomegranate molasses

¼ cup grape molasses or honey
1 tablespoon sea salt
1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
1 tablespoon ground cardamom
1 tablespoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon saffron threads, ground and dissolved in 2 tablespoons rose water (optional)

GARNISH

1 butternut squash (about 3 pounds), peeled and diced into 1-inch cubes
fresh arils (seeds) of 1 pomegranate
¼ cup walnut halves

Turkey is traditionally made in Iran as a fesenjan, cooked in grape and pomegranate molasses. It is cooked slowly and for a long time so the meat can easily fall off the bone and into the sauce. Here, this delicious concoction reminds me of the wonderful Mexican sauce known as mole, which is made with onions, chilies, nuts, peppers and dark chocolate.

Fesenjan-e buqalamu

NOTES

If you don't want to use a whole turkey, you can buy 6 to 7 pounds of already cut up thighs and breasts.

Grind all your spices just before using.

I like to use Sadaf pure pomegranate juice and pomegranate molasses for this recipe.

All the spices and other ingredients in this recipe are available at Whole Foods or Iranian markets.

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Rinse and thoroughly pat dry the turkey.
2. Rub the turkey all over (inside and out) with the dusting mixture.
3. In a wide frying pan, heat 3 tablespoons oil over medium heat until very hot. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until the onion is golden brown. Transfer the onion and garlic mixture to a food processor and add the remaining ingredients—but only 1 cup of pomegranate juice. Grind finely until you have a very smooth sauce (not grainy).
5. Add the sauce and remaining pomegranate juice to a large baking dish. Place the turkey on top of the sauce.
6. Cover the turkey (if you don't have a cover for the baking dish, use oiled parchment paper and then aluminum foil on top, and seal tightly). Bake in the preheated oven for 5 hours. Uncover and baste with the sauce. Continue to bake uncovered for 45 minutes. Adjust seasoning by adding more salt, pepper, or grape molasses. Remove from oven and cover until ready to serve.
7. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Place 2 tablespoons oil, ½ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper in a baking sheet. Add the diced squash and toss well. Spread out evenly on the baking sheet and roast in the oven for 20 minutes.
8. Place the turkey on a serving platter and spoon some of the sauce around it. Top with the roasted squash, pomegranate seeds and toasted walnuts.

Serve with saffron flavored rice. *Nush-e Jan!*

