

## Game Hens with Pomegranates

Makes 6 servings

Seeds of 1 large pomegranate  
About 1 cup sweet marsala  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint  
6 cornish game hens, rinsed and patted dry  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
10 tablespoons ( 1 ¼ sticks) unsalted butter  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
12 fresh sage leaves  
Zest of 2 oranges, cut into ¼-inch-wide strips



In a small bowl, just cover the pomegranate seeds with the marsala. Gently mix in the mint and set aside, covered, for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 375° F.

Season the birds inside and out with salt and pepper. Drain the pomegranate seeds, reserving the liquid. Stuff the birds with half of the seeds, reserving the remainder for later. Using a kitchen twine, tie together the legs of each bird.

In a large ovenproof sauté pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the butter with the olive oil over high heat (if necessary, use two pans). Add 3 of the sage leaves and cook for 11 minutes. Add the hens and brown well on all sides, about 5 minutes. Lower the heat to medium and add the remaining 9 sage leaves and reserved pomegranate seeds.

Transfer the pan to the oven and roast for 7 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven, drizzle 3 tablespoons of the reserved Marsala over the hens, and dot with 4 tablespoons of the remaining butter. Baste the hens with the pan juices and roast for 10 minutes, or until the juices run clear when a thigh is pierced.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, melt the remaining 4 tablespoons of the remaining butter over low heat. Add the orange zest and cook for 5 minutes, stirring gently so that the zest absorbs the butter. Remove from the heat.

Transfer the hens to a serving dish. Sprinkle with the range zest and drizzle the pan juices, with the pomegranate seeds, over them. Serve immediately.

**Mario Batali:** What's a game hen anyway?? Basically, it's a young chicken sold whole. What's cool about a game hen is it's sweeter and juicier than its elder counterparts. Sometimes I like to mix it up and use a squab or even guinea hen for this recipe. Either will work well and the results are equally delicious. I love to make this recipe in the winter because it's got a ton of flavor without a ton of effort. The bold flavor goes super well with a great Italian red wine like a Nebbiolo or Barbera.

[www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/mario-batali/game-hens-with-pomegranates-recipe](http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/mario-batali/game-hens-with-pomegranates-recipe)