

# ROCK CORNISH GAME HENS WITH ADOBO AND PLUMS



*Award-Winning chef, and culinary poet, Lamar Thomas, has contributed this month's recipe, which can be found in his soon to be published book, **Ginger, Lily, and Sweet Fire: A Romance with Food**. To experience Thomas' world class cuisine visit him at the East West Bistro in Downtown Athens.*



**C**hilly weather and the beautiful change of colors of North Georgia in November, the Georgia-Georgia Tech game, and of course, Thanksgiving. Just thinking about the season makes me hungry. It is a favorite for us all, and normally we gather with our extended families around the traditional 15-pound turkey and a dozen side dishes. But what if there is just the two of you, or a turkey isn't what you want this time around, and you want to save the big bird for Christmas. Well, you have a few choices for your poultry needs and they are duck, goose, chicken, turkey, pigeoneaux, dove, quail, pheasant, and Rock Cornish game hens. We will be preparing the game hen. The recipe will work just as well with any of the other birds, but there is something of a guilty pleasure in having a whole bird of your own on the plate. And that is just what we are going to do, have a whole hen with a side of sautéed acorn squash with shiitake and snow crab mushrooms.

Tyson Farms created the Rock Cornish game hens we normally see in the grocery store in the middle 1960's. The original

Cornish game hen is from the land of King Lear, Cornwall, England. They are quite affordable and just the thing if you want treat yourself to something special for dinner without the high cost, hours of basting, or endless leftovers hanging out in your refrigerator. You will find adobo seasoning in the Mexican section at your grocery store. Cardamom is usually used in sweet pastries, but in this case it is a great compliment in bringing together the spice of the adobo and the deep flavors of black strap molasses. The acorn squash is such a hearty and strong vegetable that it almost embraces and lifts the delicate flavors of the rosemary seasoned mushrooms right up off of the plate. What you end up with is a combination of bright and deep flavors, with each taste complimenting the other.

(I rarely use granulated sugar in my recipes. You really should try out all of the choices that we have for sweet flavors, the different honeys, molasses, maple syrups, and grades of sugar, including slices of raw sugar cane. Although most sugars are not considered healthy, black strap molasses is truly good for you as it is converted into energy and is not stored as fat in your body)

## THANKSGIVING

Early evening opening into a November sky  
Of fog brightened stars and shadowed trees,  
Wicker chairs creaking as we lean back and yawn,  
Sharing sweet warm tea and Anjou pears.  
Coltrane's Meditation on the stereo,  
It flows and rises,  
Moves along with the autumn song  
Of the wind and the birds in our garden.  
It's so peaceful here, after dinner,  
Relaxed and easy, where this is the wish:  
The working world slips away and it's just us,  
Here on the back porch, feeling the night,  
Feeling it all wrap around us  
So vibrant and crisp,  
Alive with thanksgiving,  
With each other.



### ADOBO AND PLUM GAME HENS

2 1-1/4 pound each, Cornish game hens  
*Thaw them out in your refrigerator. This will take a day or two, but don't rush it. Remove neck and giblets from cavity. Rinse in cold water. Pat dry with paper towel.*

#### COMBINE

2 tablespoons Adobo seasoning  
1 tablespoon ground cardamom  
1/3 cup Molasses  
1/4 cup Light soy sauce

Rub the season mix half of it over the skin and inside the cavity of the hens. Refrigerate overnight. Save the rest of the seasoning for when you cook them.

Adobo is also a paste that includes chipolte, ground sesame seeds and peanut oil, but for this recipe we are using a dry spice mix. If you cannot find Adobo seasoning, here is a simple Caribbean recipe for the dry spice. Varieties include the addition of cumin, lemon pepper, paprika or tumeric.

### ADOBO ALTERNATIVE

1 tablespoon garlic powder  
1 tablespoon onion powder  
1 tablespoon dried oregano  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper

### STUFFING

2 stalks celery, diced  
1 medium yellow onion, diced  
8 purple plums, peel and remove the stones  
2 teabags Darjeeling tea, remove tea from bags  
1/3 cup dry bread crumbs  
1/4 cup warm water to bind the stuffing

*(If you cannot find fresh plums, don't be ashamed to use canned or dried. It's okay to substitute with nectarines, apricots, lychee, rambutan, jackfruit, peaches, or even apples and pears.)*

Mix the stuffing in a small bowl. Now fill the cavity of each hen with the stuffing mix. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees. Rub the rest of the seasoning on the hens. Roast in small roasting pan for one hour.

There are two ways to check for doneness. The first is with your trusty thermometer, which will register 180 degrees, the second is to insert the tip of a boning knife into the section between the thigh and breast, the juices of the bird will run clear. If the liquid is cloudy then it is not done. Do both and you will see how it works. The skin is going to be dark, so don't think that you have burned your dinner, remember, we seasoned with molasses and soy. Let the birds rest for 10 minutes after

you take them out of the oven before you have your dinner. This allows the juices to settle and the meat to tighten back up after the cooking. They will slice easier, and will taste better if you allow this resting time.

### ACORN SQUASH WITH SHIITAKE AND SNOW CRAB MUSHROOMS

1/1 pound acorn squash, peeled, seeded and diced in 1/4 inch cubes. You will end up with about 10 ounces of squash after peeling, seeding and dicing.  
1 leek, use only the white part, diced  
4 tablespoons butter  
6 ounces snow crab mushrooms cut in half  
6 ounces shiitake mushrooms, cut in half, remove bottom part of stem  
1 stalk/1 tbs rosemary leaves. *Don't chop, just pull the leaves off of the stem and use them whole. Put the stem in a small jar of olive oil. That way you will have seasoned oil for use in another recipe.*  
1/2 teaspoon coarse salt  
1/3 teaspoon ground black pepper

Acorn squash is easy to find, easy to prepare and tastes great. Shiitake, or wood ear mushrooms are becoming much more common as our restaurant tastes are finally moving onto the grocery store shelves. Snow crab mushrooms may be harder to find, but Earth Fare is now carrying them and if they don't have them, ask. We have a wonderful local farm, The Growing Company, which produces some of the best-cultivated mushrooms in the South. Please use fresh rosemary in this recipe. Dried is for long cooking times, and the flavor of fresh herbs just cannot be imitated with dried.

In a medium skillet sauté the squash and leeks with the butter on medium high heat until they begin to soften. Add the mushrooms and cook for 2 minutes, then add the rosemary, salt and pepper and stir for one minute. That's it. Takes about 10 minutes all together.

Now, you are ready to eat. But there are a couple of more things you need to do. You need a cup of hot Darjeeling tea, a glass of Riesling, fresh crunchy slices of red apples, and a third of a cup of toasted cashews.

Place the squash all over the bottom of the plates, and then put the hen in the middle of each plate. Sprinkle the cashews over the whole dish, and then arrange the apple in a fan around the top of the plate.

If you have room for dessert, and there is always room for that, then try out a recipe for pumpkin cheesecake, or an old South standard of banana pudding.