

One dish chicken with herbs, greens, and olives

By Susie Iventosch



Chicken on polenta

Photos Susie Iventosch

With home gardens starting to produce vegetables and herbs, this chicken and veggie recipe is a perfect choice for a garden-fresh dinner. Made with scallions, Swiss chard, collard greens, cilantro, parsley, and olives, it is so delicious and easy to make in just one pot or pan. You can prepare most of the ingredients ahead of time, so it's easy to assemble once you're

ready to roll for dinner. I especially love the addition of lemon zest and lemon juice to brighten everything up, and the combination of lemon and olives gives the dish a delightful tangy and salty contrast. As the dish bakes, it creates a wonderfully flavorful sauce, so I like to serve it over a base of creamy polenta to soak it all up. You can also serve it with rice, French

bread, mashed potatoes, or even a soup spoon for mopping up the sauce. The polenta recipe I like for this dish is remarkably simple and easy to prepare. Just sauté your shallots ahead of time, and when it comes to making the polenta, simply bring water, milk (or cream) and the shallots to a low boil, and

slowly add the polenta or cornmeal, whisking as you go. The polenta thickens up very quickly. For this recipe, I make it with regular cornmeal for a creamier texture and a quicker polenta, but if you like the coarser polenta grind, that will be just as delicious.

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS

- 12 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 1/2 + cup olive oil, split (some for veggies and some for chicken - may need more for browning the chicken thighs)
- 5 cloves garlic, minced or finely chopped
- 2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 bunches green onions, thinly sliced (use both green and white parts)
- 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup fresh parsley leaves, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup diced Castelvetrano olives
- 1 large bunch collard greens (use 2 small bunches if you can't find large)
- 1 large bunch Swiss chard (use 2 small bunches if you can't find large)
- 2 lemons (one juiced and zested and one sliced into 6 wedges)
- 1 can chicken broth (14.5 ounces)

DIRECTIONS

Prepare your veggies. Slice the onions, mince the garlic, coarsely chop the herbs. Clean and trim the stems of the collard greens and Swiss Chard. Coarsely chop or tear into 2-3 inch pieces. Zest and juice the lemon. Set all of the prepared ingredients aside until ready to use. This can all be done several hours ahead of time.

Preheat oven to 425 F. Blend 1/4 cup olive oil with the garlic, salt, and coriander. Rub this mixture on top and bottom of each chicken thigh.

Heat a little of the olive oil in a large oven-proof skillet or Dutch oven. Cook over medium high heat until thighs are nicely browned. Turn thighs over and continue cooking for another 1-2 minutes. The second side does not have to be as browned. Remove chicken to a plate.

Heat a little more oil and cook the onions until translucent and just beginning to brown. Add chopped olives, cilantro, parsley, and lemon zest and continue cooking for another 2-3 minutes over medium heat, stirring occasionally.

Reduce heat to medium-low, and slowly add the chopped greens a handful at a time, until all of the greens fit into the pan, tossing them with the onions and olives in the bottom of the pan as you go. Don't over cook the greens, just cook them enough to fit them all into the pan. They should just be beginning to wilt. Gently toss greens, onions, and olives together.

Nestle chicken thighs back into the pan among the greens. Pour chicken broth and 2 tsp. lemon juice over the top and bake for about 25 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through and tender.

To serve, spoon the greens over a bed of the polenta and place two chicken thighs on top. Serve with a lemon wedge on the side.

Creamy Caramelized Shallot Polenta

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large shallots, peeled and chopped
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup cream or milk
- 1 cup cornmeal
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan or similar cheese

DIRECTIONS

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan. Add shallots and cook over medium heat until beginning to caramelize. Add water and cream (or milk) and stir to incorporate shallots. Bring the mixture to a slow boil and slowly add the cornmeal a little bit at a time, whisking with each addition to combine. Once the cornmeal is added, bring mixture just to a boil and remove from heat. Stir in grated cheese. If you want to make the polenta ahead of time, reheat when you're ready to serve and you may need to add just a little more liquid to make it soft and creamy again.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

Lamorinda summer music camp coming next month

By Diane Claytor

In just a matter of days, summer vacation begins for Lamorinda students. Kids, teachers and school employees will go off to enjoy the lazy, hazy days of summer. School buildings will go dark, campuses will go quiet -- but for one week in June, music will fill the air around Campolindo High School.

The Lamorinda Summer Music camp will bring fourth through eighth graders to Campolindo to have fun learning, enjoying and playing instrumental music.

Under the tutelage of Tana Barnett, Campolindo's director of instrumental music, a staff of professional musicians serving as teachers, and local high school band and orchestra students serving as counselors, this summer enrichment program is designed to offer young students the opportunity to learn new skills, make new friends, and grow a lasting love of music.

With a degree from the Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific in both saxophone performance and music education, Barnett has spent 25 years

teaching music, the majority of those in the south bay. She has performed with Dave Brubeck, the California, San Francisco and San Jose Wind Orchestras, and pit orchestras around the bay area.

As she completes her first year at Campo, teaching wind ensemble, concert band, orchestra, and AP music theory, Barnett is enthusiastic about the school's "very strong music program," and is really looking forward to next year when the Campo orchestra and wind ensemble will perform at Carnegie Hall, competing in the New York International Music Festival. "This will be no small feat," Barnett notes, "traveling with about 90 students as well as all their instruments."

The idea of a summer music camp actually began with a group of Campo students last year, Barnett explains. "The kids started an informal camp for middle and elementary school students," she says. "The high school students organized small chamber groups and learning experiences. There was no

adult director, just a group of really motivated kids who are super excited about music." The program attracted 20 local campers, and the evaluation from both the participants and their parents was overwhelmingly positive.

Several months ago, some of Barnett's students approached her with the idea of organizing a similar program this summer. Barnett has run summer music camps before and wanted some time to develop the structure for this particular program.

She reviewed her ideas with the students and got their concurrence. Barnett reached out to local school music directors, who agreed the camp was a good idea and wanted to participate. Joining her at this June 24-28 program are Edwin Cordoba, director of Instrumental Music at Acalanes; Britany Shankle, director of Instrumental and Choral Music at Las Lomas; John Speers, who teaches elementary band and strings for the Orinda Unified School District; and Kevin Stewart, currently direc-

tor of Saxophone Studies at the college level.

The camp runs from 9 a.m to 3:30 p.m., offers both before and after care, and is open to all levels of instrumental musicians, from beginners to advanced. There will be general music courses, music games, music theory, and lots of music playing. There will also be outdoor activities and games, as well as team building. "It is, after all, summer camp," Barnett exclaims. "We want it to be fun."

She envisions an instrument-specific and band program where high school students are paired with younger students who play at approximately the same level. "We'll play, work, have a whole general music experience and then at the end of the week, have a performance to showcase all we've done," Barnett says.

The whole idea, Barnett states, is for music students to "of course, make music for a week," have fun, and connect with their peers from other schools.

For more information and to register, go to <https://lamorindasm.org>.

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Coach's Corner

Welcome to Coach's Corner, where Advantage College Planning addresses questions asked by local student families. If you have a question you'd like us to address, please email us.eastbay@advcp.com.

Question: My daughter is a sophomore at Acalanes, and we're debating whether to sign her up for the SAT or ACT. Is it worth it?

Answer: For a sophomore considering the SAT or ACT, these tests can be helpful for college admissions and offer multiple benefits. While many colleges are now test-optional, a significant number—particularly selective institutions—are starting to re-require standardized test scores as policies rebound post-COVID.

High scores may lead to scholarships and merit-based financial aid, making education more affordable. Students can choose between the SAT, which emphasizes critical thinking, and the ACT, known for its content-heavy format, allowing them to play to their strengths.

However, individual circumstances are crucial to consider. Limited preparation time or stronger showcases in other areas of the application might mean focusing efforts elsewhere could be more beneficial. Also, for test-blind schools, preparing for these tests may not provide any advantage.

In conclusion, the decision to take the SAT or ACT should be tailored to each student's situation, but generally, the benefits make them worth considering.

Question: I've got a junior; when should we consider letters of recommendation?

Answer: As Cole, our consultant from the Moraga office and a former high school English teacher, shares, the end of your junior year is the optimal time to ask for letters of recommendation. While asking during your senior year is acceptable, avoiding delays beyond October is crucial.

Most non-UCs and CSUs require four recommendations: two from teachers, one from a counselor, and one from a college counselor. Teacher recommendations should come from academic subject teachers, including at least one teacher you will have during your senior year. It's best to wait until you've established a relationship with this teacher before requesting a recommendation early in the fall.

Also, submitting additional strong recommendations can be helpful. These can come from various sources, including PE teachers, art teachers, or community members. You can email any extra recommendations directly to undergraduate admissions.

If you share a strong bond with a teacher or community member, seeking their endorsement is wise; otherwise, it's best to refrain.

We'll be back next month with more Q&A!



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