

Introduction

Cranberry Glazed Chicken offers a delightful blend of sweet and savory flavors that transform a simple poultry dish into a festive culinary masterpiece. This recipe marries the tartness of cranberries with the robust essence of barbecue sauce and the rich notes of balsamic vinegar, resulting in a glaze that tantalizes the palate. Ideal for weeknight dinners or special occasions, this dish is sure to impress family and friends alike. Pair it with your favorite sides for a well-rounded meal that evokes warmth and comfort.

Detailed Ingredients

chicken thighs or drumsticks: 8 pieces, seasoned with salt, pepper, and paprika
fresh or frozen cranberries: 1 cup
fresh thyme sprigs: a handful, for garnish

For the Glaze:

sweet barbecue sauce: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (honey garlic preferred)
soy sauce: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
cranberry juice: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
maple syrup: 2 tbsp
balsamic vinegar: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
sea salt: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp
black pepper: $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp
garlic cloves: 2, minced
mustard: $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp (maple-flavored preferred, but any kind works)
dark brown sugar: 1 heaping tbsp

Prep Time

15 minutes

Cook Time, Total Time, Yield

Cooking Time: 40 minutes

Total Time: 55 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

Detailed Directions and Instructions

Prepare the Glaze

Begin by making the glaze that will envelop the chicken in sweetness and depth. In a small pot over medium heat, whisk together the sweet barbecue sauce, soy sauce, cranberry juice, maple syrup, balsamic vinegar, sea salt, black pepper, minced garlic, mustard, and dark brown sugar. Stir the mixture continuously until it comes to a gentle boil. Monitor it closely to ensure the sugar fully dissolves and the sauce thickens slightly. Once it achieves the desired consistency, remove it from heat and set it aside for later use.

Preheat the Oven

While preparing the glaze, take the opportunity to preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C). This will ensure the environment is hot enough to perfectly cook the chicken once it's ready to go in.

Cook the Chicken

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large oven-safe skillet or cast-iron pan over medium heat. Once the oil is shimmering, carefully place the seasoned chicken thighs or drumsticks into the skillet. Sear them for approximately 4-5 minutes on each side, or until golden brown. Be cautious not to overcrowd the pan, as this will lead to steaming rather than searing, which affects the flavor and texture. If excess fat or liquid accumulates in the pan during this process, carefully drain it off to avoid sogginess.

Bake the Chicken

Once the chicken pieces are seared to perfection, pour the prepared glaze generously over them. Sprinkle fresh or frozen cranberries atop the chicken and add a few fresh thyme sprigs for a beautiful presentation and additional flavor. Carefully transfer the skillet to the preheated oven and bake for 35-40 minutes. Keep an eye on the chicken to ensure it cooks thoroughly and reaches an internal temperature of 165°F (75°C). If any liquid remains after baking, drain it off before serving to maintain a beautiful glaze.

Serve

Once the chicken is fully cooked, take it out of the oven and allow it to rest for a few minutes. Serve hot, allowing your guests or family members to savor the succulent flavors and beautiful presentation. This dish pairs wonderfully with seasonal vegetables, rice, or a

tangy salad, making it a versatile choice for any dining occasion.

Notes

This recipe can be easily adjusted for different tastes—consider using chicken breasts for a leaner option or switching up the herbs. If you prefer, you can even add some chili flakes to the glaze for a hint of spice. Always taste the glaze before pouring it over the chicken, adjusting sweetness or saltiness to your preference.

Cook Techniques

Searing: This technique involves cooking the chicken over medium heat in a skillet until the outside is browned and crispy. Searing locks in juices and enhances flavor, making a significant difference in the overall taste of the dish.

Baking: Baking the chicken allows it to cook evenly and thoroughly, all while absorbing the glaze flavors. This is an essential step to ensure the chicken is juicy and tender.

Glazing: Applying a glaze to the chicken adds a shiny, delicious coating that elevates the dish. It also helps to keep the chicken moist during cooking.

FAQ

Can I use chicken breasts instead of thighs or drumsticks?

Yes, chicken breasts can be used, but they may cook faster, so adjust the cooking time accordingly and monitor the internal temperature to avoid overcooking.

Can I prepare the glaze in advance?

Absolutely! You can prepare the glaze ahead of time and store it in the refrigerator for several days. Just reheat it gently before using.

What sides pair well with cranberry glazed chicken?

This dish pairs nicely with roasted vegetables, rice pilaf, or a simple green salad. You could also serve it with mashed potatoes or quinoa for a heartier meal.

Can I freeze leftovers?

Yes, you can freeze leftover cranberry glazed chicken. Store it in an airtight container, and it should last for up to three months. Thaw in the refrigerator before reheating.

What kind of cranberries should I use?

You can use either fresh or frozen cranberries for this recipe. If using frozen, there's no need to thaw them before baking.

Conclusion

Sweet and Savory Cranberry Glazed Chicken brings a delightful twist to chicken dishes, combining vibrant flavors that embody the essence of home-cooked comfort food. The combination of sweet, tangy, and savory elements offers a taste sensation that appeals to diverse palates. As you whip up this easy recipe, prepare to impress guests or elevate a regular family dinner with minimal effort for big rewards. Each bite brings a burst of flavor, making it a dish you will return to time and again.

More recipes suggestions and combinations

Maple and Mustard Glazed Salmon

This fish dish similarly embraces sweet and savory elements, balancing maple syrup with mustard for an incredible explosion of flavors.

Sweet Potatoes with Cranberry Sauce

A perfect side dish to complement cranberry glazed chicken, roasted sweet potatoes tossed with homemade cranberry sauce bring a seasonal flair to the table.

Herb-Roasted Vegetables

Oven-roasted seasonal vegetables drizzled with olive oil and herbs add texture and color, serving as a nutritious accompaniment to the main dish.

Spinach and Goat Cheese Salad

A light salad featuring fresh spinach, creamy goat cheese, and a light vinaigrette will offer a refreshing contrast to the hearty chicken.

Quinoa Pilaf with Nuts and Dried Fruits

This hearty side brings together nutty quinoa, crunchy nuts, and sweet dried fruits for a wholesome, filling complement to the chicken.