



# Chicken Pastilla

**SERVES 8**

Pastilla is one of the most glorious dishes in the Moroccan kitchen. It's often served for special occasions and is similar to chicken pot pie. But the filling can also be made with seafood, quail, and pigeon. It may sound odd to read the ingredients that include both sweet and savory, but once you bite into this labor of love, you'll understand why this golden pastry is so special. Don't let the long recipe deter you. It is worth the time and effort and is a pièce de resistance.

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## INGREDIENTS

### Chicken Pastilla:

½ cup canola oil  
3 cups onions, chopped  
1 tablespoon ginger, minced  
2 tablespoons garlic, minced  
1 tablespoon ground turmeric  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground cumin  
¼ cup cilantro leaves, chopped  
3 teaspoons kosher salt, divided  
3 pounds chicken thighs with bone  
1 cup water

4 eggs, beaten  
1 recipe of spiced almonds (recipe below)  
¾ cup butter  
10 sheets of phyllo dough  
3 tablespoons powdered sugar

### Spiced Almonds:

2 cups whole almonds, skin-on  
1/3 cup sugar  
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg  
Pinch of ground cloves  
4 teaspoons butter, melted  
2 teaspoons orange blossom water

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## PROCESS:

### Chicken Pastilla:

Heat oil in a large deep skillet over medium high heat. Add onions and cook for about 15 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon, cumin, cilantro, and 2 teaspoons salt. Cook for 8-10 minutes, stirring constantly to prevent spices from burning. Add the chicken thighs to the pan and pour over the water and remaining teaspoon of salt. Bring to a simmer.



Cover pan and reduce heat to medium low. Cook for 1 hour, or until the chicken pieces are tender and the meat pulls easily from the bones. Using tongs, remove chicken pieces to a platter. Add the beaten eggs to the pan and stir constantly until the mixture comes to a simmer. Continue stirring for 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Pull the chicken meat from the bones and put back into the pan, discarding the bones. Stir to combine and set aside to cool for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Melt the butter and set aside. Remove phyllo sheets from the packaging. Unfold and keep covered with a damp towel to keep from drying out. Put a 9" skillet or springform pan on a work surface. Brush a phyllo sheet with butter and lay it in the bottom of the pan, allowing the sheet to hang over the edge of the pan by about 3". Repeat with 4 more sheets, buttering each, until the bottom of the pan is covered with dough and there is a 3" overhand around the pan. With remaining 5 sheets of phyllo dough, place the buttered sheets more toward the edges of the pan, so the overhanging will reach the center of the pastilla when the filling is added.

Sprinkle and spread half the almond mixture in the bottom of the pan. Add half the chicken mixture over the almonds, and repeat with almond mixture, and end with remaining chicken mixture. Gently fold the sheets of phyllo over the filling, covering entirely. Brush top with butter. Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until the phyllo is golden brown. Remove from oven and cool for 15 minutes.

If using a skillet, carefully invert the pan onto a baking sheet, then using 2 spatulas, remove to a platter. If using a springform pan, remove sides and using 2 spatulas, remove to a platter.

Lay a mesh cooling rack over the pastilla and sprinkle with powdered sugar, creating a hashtag design. Remove the rack and cut into wedges and serve.

### **Spiced Almonds:**

In a small skillet, add the almonds and heat over medium heat. Stir until lightly toasted and fragrant, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and put into the bowl of a food processor. Add remaining ingredients and pulse until mixture becomes a coarse paste. Remove to a bowl.