



PREP

20 minutes

COOK

60 minutes

YIELD

6-8

READY IN

1 hour 20 minutes

## Instant Pot Georgian Pomegranate Chicken Recipe

*The easiest chicken for the holidays or any time.*

BY SONYA SANFORD | SEPTEMBER 4, 2018

I was initially an Instant Pot doubter. I love both my Dutch oven and my stock pot, and I love letting the kitchen slowly fill with warmth as things simmer and cook for hours while I putz around the house. Then I got married and an Instant Pot (real talk: Instapot) literally showed up on my doorstep. At the risk of sounding ungrateful, I put it in the closet and forgot about it for at least six months.

And then I heard about making rice in the Instant Pot. My first pot of sushi rice instantly made me a convert. My first vegetable stock changed my feelings about how stock can best be made. My first batch of chickpeas led me to making hummus on a more regular basis. Rice, stock, and beans are all great in the Instant Pot, but I still carried some skepticism about cooking other things. Chicken? What's wrong with cooking it in the oven? Turns out, chicken in the pressure cooker is DELICIOUS. The chicken ends up deeply infused with any added aromatic or spice, it becomes fall-off-the-bone tender, and requires much less attention than cooking it on the stove.

As documented by the queen of Jewish cooking, [Joan Nathan](#), and by Georgian food guru, [Carla Capalbo](#), the Georgian Jewish community traditionally makes chicken cooked in pomegranate juice for Rosh Hashanah. It's a perfect recipe for the High Holidays: sweet, tart, flavorful, and eye-catching. This recipe is an adaptation from multiple recipes for this dish, but in any variation the chicken is braised in a generously-spiced, fruity pomegranate juice-based broth, and then topped with fresh red jewel-like pomegranate kernals.

The pomegranate juice adds expected sweetness, but there's also an assertive and awakening tang that comes through, especially with the addition of tamarind and pomegranate molasses. The copious amounts of onion and garlic add deep levels of sweet savorniness to the dish. The coriander, hot pepper (not too hot), and thyme play off each other with their respective perfuminess, heat, and mintyness. It is Rosh Hashanah, so a hint of honey makes its way into the pot to remind you of sweetness without being at the forefront of the show.

After 15 minutes at high pressure, the chicken barely clings to its bones, and the sauce becomes rich with and fortified by the golden schmaltz left over from browning the chicken. Take the chicken out and let that liquid simmer (still in the Instant Pot), and the mahogany-colored sauce will thicken and become silky and as decadent as a festive meal demands.

Once the chicken and sauce are plated, you shower them with the bright green fresh herbs and the glistening ruby red pomegranate seeds. Dark meat works best for this, but you can certainly make it with white meat as well. And like all great holiday dishes, you can make this several days in advance and it only gets better when reheated. It also freezes well, just leave off the fresh garnish until right before serving. And yes, if you really don't want to cave to culinary social pressure, you can make this recipe the old-fashioned way.

Note: this recipe can easily be doubled. You can find tamarind paste and pomegranate molasses at Middle Eastern stores, Whole Foods, or online.

### Ingredients

12 whole chicken legs, or 6 bone-in thighs + 6 legs (about 4 lbs)

Sunflower or avocado oil, as needed

3 medium red onions, halved and sliced thin

4-5 cloves garlic, finely minced

2 tsp ground coriander  
1½ tsp Aleppo pepper, or ½ t red pepspper flake, or to taste  
1 tsp sweet paprika  
2 Tbsp tomato paste  
1 cup pomegranate juice  
2 Tbsp pomegranate molasses  
2 Tbsp tamarind paste  
1 Tbsp honey  
3 sprigs fresh thyme  
1 bay leaf  
Arils/seeds of 1 whole pomegranate  
½ bunch fresh cilantro or parlesy, for garnish  
Salt and pepper, as needed

### Directions

1. Start by generously seasoning your chicken with salt and pepper on both sides.

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2. Turn your Instant Pot or pressure cooker to the sauté setting, which should produce high heat for browning. If needed increase the heat to MORE or according to the manufacturer's instructions. Once the pot is hot, add a drizzle of oil. Brown each piece of chicken until golden brown, about 3-4 minutes on each side. Cook the chicken in batches so as not to crowd the pot and cause the chicken to steam instead of brown. On the stoetop, brown the chicken in a large pot or Dutch oven on medium high heat. Once all of the chicken is browned, transfer it from the pot and reserve.

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3. Next, add all of the onions to the same pot so that they can cook in the remaining chicken fat. If your chicken did not release very much oil, and another tablespoon or two of oil to the pot. Season the onions with salt and sauté for 5-6 minutes or until softened and starting to slightly brown. Add the garlic, coriander, and paprika to the pot and sauté for an additional 1-2 minutes, or until fragrant. Add the tomato paste, and stir everything until the onion mixture is well coated in the tomato paste. Nestle the reserved browned chicken back into the pot. Press CANCEL to turn off the sauté function on the pot. Follow the same steps on a stovetop.

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4. Add the pomegranate juice, pomegranate molasses, tamarind paste, honey, thyme, and bay to the pot. Place the lid on the Instant Pot, close the pot and seal it. Press the POULTRY or MANUAL setting and set the time to 15 minutes. Let the steam naturally release for 10-15 minutes, and shift the valve to venting if more air needs to be released. On the stovetop, cover the pot and simmer for 30 minutes on medium-low or until the chicken is tender and cooked through.

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5. Press CANCEL, open the lid and tranfser the chicken to a platter and lightly cover with foil to keep the chicken warm. Remove the bay leaf and thyme stems. Turn on the SAUTE function again. Allow the sauce to simmer and reduce by half, or until its reached your desired thickness. On the stovetop, turn the heat to medium-high and simmer.

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6. Once the sauce has reduced and thickened, pour the sauce over the chicken. At this point you can keep dish warm in a low oven, or you can cool it and freeze if making in advance.

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7. Just before serving, garnish the chicken with the fresh pomegranate and roughly chopped cilantro or parsley.

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