

KAPNOS IN A BASKET

If you're in the market for a perfect hostess gift, head to Bethesda's Kapnos Kouzina and shop its Greek pantry, with shelves of intriguing imported Greek food items, many of which are used in the restaurant's dishes. Better yet, let them do the choosing for you. Their woven jute Greek Pantry Basket (\$65) includes:

- > 1 jar of Attiki-brand wildflower and thyme honey
- > 1 jar of Sarantis-brand orange jam
- > 1 bag of hilopites (square wheat pastina)
- > 1 package of ouzo (anise-flavored) candies
- > 1 can of Palirria-brand peas in tomato sauce
- > 1 can of Palirria-brand imam (eggplant baked in tomato sauce)
- > 1 bottle of Petrina-brand extra-virgin olive oil made with olives from the village of Petrina, at the foothills of the Taygetos Mountains. (This lush oil is used on nearly every dish at all three Kapnos locations.)

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recipe

KAPNOS CHICKEN HILOPITES 2 to 3 servings

This recipe from George Pagonis, executive chef and partner of Kapnos, Kapnos Kouzina and Kapnos Taverna, uses hilopites, small squares of pasta made with trahana (an ancient Greek food created by mixing wheat with milk or yogurt to create a porridge that's then dried and broken into granules).

INGREDIENTS

2 (6-ounce) skin-on, boneless chicken breasts
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 medium white onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, minced
½ teaspoon salt
1 pinch Aleppo (may substitute cayenne pepper)
1 pinch ground black pepper
1 cup dry white wine
1 (14½-ounce) can whole plum tomatoes
1 dried bay leaf
1 cup chicken stock
8 ounces hilopites pasta
¼ cup heavy cream (optional)
1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Grated Mizithra or Romano cheese, as desired
1 tablespoon minced fresh chives

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Season the chicken breasts on both sides with salt and pepper. In an ovenproof sauté pan over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it begins to smoke. Sear the chicken breasts on both sides until golden brown, starting with the skin side first. Transfer the chicken to a small baking sheet and cook for 20 to 25 minutes until cooked through (165 degrees internal temperature). Remove from the oven and let the chicken rest for 5 minutes.

2. While the chicken is baking, return the sauté pan to the heat over medium. Sauté the onion and garlic until translucent, 5 to 10 minutes. Add the ½ teaspoon salt, Aleppo and black pepper. Add

the wine and cook for 5 minutes until the alcohol has evaporated. Add the tomatoes and bay leaf and cook for 10 minutes to reduce by one-quarter. Remove and discard the bay leaf and use a stick blender to purée the sauce until smooth. Add the chicken stock and hilopites and bring to a simmer. Cook, stirring constantly, for 10 minutes, until the pasta is al dente and the sauce is creamy. When almost done, add the cream, if using, and 1 tablespoon lemon juice, more if desired. Cook for 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a serving plate. Slice the chicken widthwise into ¾-inch slices, place them atop the pasta, and sprinkle them with cheese and chives.

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