

CABERNET MERLOT CHICKEN LOLLIPOPS WITH ROASTED GRAPES

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Yield: 6–8 chicken lollipops

Prep Time: About 25 minutes

Cook Time: About 45–50 minutes

Oven: 425°F

INGREDIENTS

Chicken

- 6–8 whole chicken drumsticks
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

Cabernet Merlot Balsamic Glaze

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Nonna Pia's Cabernet Merlot Balsamic Glaze
- 1 teaspoon Nonna Pia's Chianti Wine Vinegar
- 1–2 teaspoons honey, to taste
- 1 teaspoon gluten-free Dijon mustard
- 1 garlic clove, finely minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tablespoon cold butter

Roasted Grapes & Shallots

- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups red seedless grapes
- 2 medium shallots, halved or quartered
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- Kosher salt
- Freshly cracked black pepper
- 1–2 teaspoons Nonna Pia's Chianti Wine Vinegar

For Serving

- 2–3 ounces Gorgonzola, crumbled
- Fresh rosemary
- Fresh thyme
- Flaky sea salt, optional
- Extra Cabernet Merlot Balsamic Glaze for finishing

INSTRUCTIONS

1. MAKE THE CHICKEN LOLLIPOPS

- Cut around the narrow end of each drumstick through the skin and tendons until you reach the bone.
- Remove the loosened tendons and cartilage, then push the meat and skin down toward the thick end of the drumstick to create the lollipop shape.
- Clean the exposed bone if necessary and pat the chicken very dry.

2. SEASON THE CHICKEN

- Preheat the oven to **425°F**.
- Coat the chicken with olive oil, garlic powder, salt, black pepper and chopped rosemary.
- Arrange the lollipops on a wire rack set over a baking sheet, leaving space between them so the hot air can circulate.

3. START ROASTING

- Roast the chicken for approximately **30–35 minutes before glazing**.
- Chicken drumsticks are safe to eat at 165°F, but dark meat becomes much more tender when allowed to cook beyond that. I prefer these around **175–185°F** when finished.

4. ROAST THE GRAPES & SHALLOTS

- While the chicken cooks, toss the grapes and shallots with olive oil, rosemary, salt and pepper.
- Roast at **425°F for 18–25 minutes**, until the grapes soften and begin to burst and the shallots caramelize around the edges.
- Remove from the oven and toss with **1 teaspoon Chianti Wine Vinegar**.
- Taste.
- Add the second teaspoon if you want a little more acidity.
- And DO NOT skip the grapes because you think they're just there to look pretty.
- Trust Mr. No Portion Control on this one. 😊

5. MAKE THE CABERNET MERLOT GLAZE

- Combine the Cabernet Merlot Balsamic Glaze, Chianti Wine Vinegar, 1 teaspoon honey, Dijon, garlic and rosemary in a small saucepan.
- Gently simmer for **2–3 minutes**.
- Taste before adding additional honey. The goal isn't to turn this into a sugary barbecue sauce. You want to keep the savory, tart character of the Cabernet Merlot glaze while adding just enough sweetness to balance it and help it caramelize.
- Remove from the heat and whisk in the cold butter.
- Set aside about one-third of the finished glaze in a clean bowl for finishing the platter.

6. GLAZE THE CHICKEN

- During the final **8–10 minutes** of cooking, brush the chicken generously with the Cabernet Merlot glaze.
- Roast for 4–5 minutes.
- Brush with another thin layer and return to the oven for another 3–5 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through and the glaze is glossy and caramelized.
- Keep an eye on it during these final minutes. The glaze contains sugar and can go from beautifully caramelized to *well, shit* surprisingly quickly. 😊

7. BUILD THE PLATTER

- Scatter the roasted grapes and shallots over a large serving platter.
- Arrange the Cabernet Merlot chicken lollipops over and around them.
- Drizzle with some of the reserved glaze.
- Crumble the Gorgonzola over everything, then tuck in a few fresh rosemary sprigs and scatter fresh thyme over the platter.
- Finish with a little flaky salt and black pepper if desired.
- Pour yourself the Cabernet Merlot you've been thinking about this entire time.