

Spartan Chicken with Sweet Onion Sauce



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Serves 6

So many dishes in Greece have a story and this one is unusual. I discovered this dish under a different name, “Albanian Chicken,” in a string of tiny villages above the ancient Greek city of Sparta. It apparently became part of the local cuisine many centuries ago, when Christianized Albanians moved en masse into Greece. It morphed into a dish called Kotopoulo (chicken) Vardouniotiko, after the name of the cluster of villages, Vardounohoria, right above Sparta. Sensitive to the linguistic limitations of most non-Greek speakers, I took the liberty and invoked my own poetic license in

renaming the dish, for simplicity's sake, Spartan Chicken.



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Ingredients

1 chicken 1 ½-2 kilos (3.3.-4.4lbs), cut into serving portions

Salt

¼ cup red wine vinegar

1 ½ cup extra virgin Greek olive oil

6 large red onions, finely chopped

¼ kilo (2.2lbs) Feta cheese, crumbled

Instructions

1. Trim the chicken and place in a large bowl. Sprinkle with salt and toss with vinegar. Let the chicken stand, covered and refrigerated, for a half hour.

2. In the meantime, heat the olive oil in a large, heavy pan over medium heat and add the onions. Cover the pan and cook the onions over very low heat for about 20 – 25 minutes, checking occasionally to see if they need a little water. They shouldn't. The onions will exude a surprising amount of their own juices.

3. Strain and dry the chicken. Push the onions to one side of the pan and sauté the chicken lightly inside the same pan, just until it turns light golden brown. Season to taste with additional salt. Push the onions towards the pan's sides and sauté the chicken lightly until it gains some color. Season. Spoon about half the onions over the chicken, smothering it, so to speak. Cook the chicken and onions, covered

and over very low heat, for about an hour, or until the chicken is falling off the bones and the onions are so soft they are almost liquid.

4. Add the crumbled feta 10 minutes before removing the pan from the heat. Cover again and let the feta melt and integrate with the onion until the sauce turns thick and creamy. Serve immediately.