



# RECIPE for health

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featured food:

## POMEGRANATE

By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

I don't often play favorites when it comes to food. Every food contributes flavor and variety. Yet there's no denying, pomegranates are one of the best fruits of winter. In season from October through February, pomegranates provide that pop of color for your holiday table. Inside their lumpy softball façade, they're chockfull of ruby red jewels with flavor that is nature's blend of cranberry, apple, and grape.

Pomegranates are native from Iran to northern India, cultivated since ancient times throughout the Mediterranean region. Pomegranates need very hot, dry conditions to ripen. Settlers brought them from Spain in 1769 to what is now California. Today pomegranates are mainly grown in the San Joaquin Valley and parts of Arizona.

This time of year, pomegranates are a good bargain. Pick one from the pile in the produce aisle and you can hardly go wrong. A properly-ripened pomegranate is heavy with firm skin. Pomegranates get juicier and more flavorful when stored at room temperature. After a week, move them to the fridge where they'll be fine for a month or more.

Pomegranate means "apple with many seeds." [Open one](#) and you'll see why. This fruit has no fleshiness at all, just hundreds of crunchy seeds individually encased in juice sacs called arils. Once you've separated the arils from the leathery skin and white membrane, you can use them in many ways:

- Just as they are, sprinkle the arils on salads, or anything! And yes, the seeds are edible.
- Make juice by squeezing the arils. A potato ricer works well for this. Careful—the juice is likely to spray. Pomegranate juice makes a refreshing beverage. Also useful for dressings, sauces, and marinades.
- Reduce the juice to make pomegranate syrup, called grenadine.
- Freeze arils to hold you over until next pomegranate season.

## Triple-Pomegranate Chicken

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Serves 4

- 4 (6-8 oz. each) boneless skinless chicken breasts
- Salt and pepper
- 3 T. olive oil
- ¼ c. thinly sliced shallots
- ¼ c. matchstick cut carrots
- 1 jalapeno, seeded and diced
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 2 c. chicken broth
- ½ c. pomegranate juice
- 1 t. orange zest
- ¼ c. pomegranate arils
- 2 T. butter
- 1 T. pomegranate red wine vinegar
- 2 T. fresh mint, sliced thin

Lightly season chicken with salt and pepper. In large sauté pan over medium high heat, warm oil. Add chicken and sear for 3 minutes on each side until slightly browned. Remove chicken from pan and set aside.

Lower heat to medium; add shallots, carrots, and jalapeno to the pan and sauté for 4 minutes. Add garlic and sauté an additional minute.

To deglaze the pan, pour in chicken broth and scrape to release bits stuck to the bottom of the pan. Add juice and zest. Turn the heat up to medium high. Let sauce reduce for about 5 minutes. Add chicken back to the pan. Continue cooking until the sauce has reduced by more than half and chicken has reached internal temperature of 160 degrees. Remove pan from the heat. Transfer chicken to serving platter.

To the pan, stir in pomegranate arils, butter in small chunks, and vinegar. Add the mint. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Spoon sauce over chicken and serve.

For this recipe, Chef Kurt called upon his training in classic French techniques. He was inspired by a blueberry sauce he made at the Culinary Institute of America, making this one with pomegranates incorporated through three ingredients.

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