



Spotlight Halal: **Chicken Marsala (Pollo al Marsala)**

Spotlight Halal is a collection of food and ingredient articles from IsItHaram.com.

This article can be found online at: <http://www.isitharam.com/features/chickenmarsala.jsp>.

WHAT IS IT?

Chicken Marsala an Italian dish of chicken breast cutlets and mushrooms cooked in a **Marsala wine sauce**. Chicken Marsala is one of the more popular chicken dishes in Italian American restaurants.

A similar dish, *filetto di manzo col Marsala*, is made using beef filets in place of chicken.

HOW IS IT MADE?

Chicken Marsala is prepared by lightly frying flour-coated chicken breast halves in olive oil and then braising them with butter, olive oil, onions, mushrooms and herbs in a sauce of **Marsala wine**. The **Marsala wine sauce** thickens to nearly the consistency of a syrup while the chicken is slowly cooked and flavored by it. **Marsala wine** is frequently used in Italian cooking — in *risotto* recipes, and to produce rich Italian desserts such as *zabaglione*, *tiramisu* and shortcake.

Marsala is a sweet Sicilian **red wine** that has been fortified with **ethanol (ethyl alcohol)**, the kind of **alcohol** found in all **alcoholic beverages**. Because it is fortified, it has an **alcohol content of around 20%**, compared to an **alcohol content of 12%** for the **typical wine**. It is similar in flavor and strength to **Port Wine**.

The typical recipe for Chicken Marsala calls for 1 cup of **Marsala wine**.

– Try our halal version of *The Olive Garden's recipe for **Chicken Marsala***. Next page! –

WARNING LEVEL: LOW

Muslims who insist on *zabiha* meat would likely opt for seafood or vegetarian dishes, instead of chicken, while dining at Italian restaurants. Also, most restaurant menus list **Marsala wine** as an ingredient in Chicken Marsala. It can, however, be a danger area for Muslims who are not familiar with Italian cuisine.

SPECIAL NOTE: ALCOHOL AND COOKING

AMNA classifies any food that has been made with an **alcoholic product** as **ALCOHOL**, even if it has been sautéed, simmered, baked or set on fire. The conventional wisdom accepted by just about everyone is that all the **alcohol** you add to a dish evaporates during cooking. It's wrong.



ALCOHOL

Chicken Marsala is an Italian dish of chicken breasts cooked in a sauce of fortified Marsala wine.



A platter of *Chicken Marsala*

In fact, according to a study conducted by the **US Department of Agriculture's Nutrient Data Laboratory**, you have to cook something for a good three hours to remove virtually all traces of **alcohol**. After it has simmered for 15 minutes, **40% of the alcohol remains** in the Chicken Marsala – around two thirds of a cup.

– Learn more about Alcohol cook-off times on the [IsItHaram.com](http://www.IsItHaram.com) web site at:
http://www.IsItHaram.com/our_criteria/prohibited/alcohol_cooking.jsp –

AMNA RECOMMENDS

This dish cannot be made without **wine**. Unlike **Shrimp Scampi** (<http://www.isitharam.com/features/shrimpscampi.jsp>), where **white wine** is added during the final minute of preparation, Chicken Marsala is actually cooked in and flavored with the **Marsala wine sauce** from the beginning. You can, however, try our *halal* recipe adaptation of this classic Southern Italian dish at home in your own kitchen.

WHAT DOES ALCOHOL MEAN?

ALCOHOL is the rating that we give to any food that always contains **alcohol** or an **alcohol-derived product**. **AMNA Muslim Food Advisor**, a service of [IsItHaram.com](http://www.IsItHaram.com), rates Chicken Marsala as **ALCOHOL** because it is always cooked in a **fortified red wine sauce**.



At [IsItHaram.com](http://www.IsItHaram.com), our Guiding Principle is to provide the diverse Muslim communities living in Western countries with practical information about the wide range of food choices they face on a daily basis, but from an Islamic perspective. We don't say a food is *haram* or *halal*; we say: "*This food is made with **alcohol** and **pork**,*" or, "*That food normally contains chicken.*"

Whether or not you insist on *zabihah*, our flexible and informative approach allows you to make informed decisions on what to buy and eat.

RECIPE: HALAL CHICKEN MARSALA

This version uses pomegranate syrup or juice in place of wine.

INGREDIENTS

4 chicken breasts, boneless & skinless
½ cup flour
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tbsp dried oregano
4 tbsp (¼ cup) olive oil
4 tbsp (¼ cup) butter
2 large sweet Vidalia onions, thinly sliced
2 cups fresh mushrooms, washed and sliced
1/3 cup pomegranate syrup,
or, 1 cup unsweetened pomegranate juice
Water, as needed

DIRECTIONS

1. Do not wash raw chicken. Keep raw juices separate from other foods. Clean hands, utensils and surfaces.
2. POUND chicken breasts between sheets of plastic wrap until about 1/2» (1 cm.) thick.
3. COMBINE flour, salt, pepper and oregano in a mixing bowl or ziploc bag. Coat chicken pieces in the flour, shaking off any excess.
4. HEAT oil and butter together in a skillet over medium heat. Cook chicken breasts on medium heat for about 2 minutes on the first side, until lightly browned. Turn breasts over to cook other side. Cook breasts about 2 more minutes, until both sides are lightly browned, but not cooked thru.
5. REMOVE chicken and set aside.
6. ADD onions and mushrooms to pan, stirring occasionally until onions turn transparent. Add pomegranate syrup and stir. Then place the chicken breasts back in the pan, coating with the onion mushroom sauce.
7. COVER, lower heat and simmer for about 15 minutes. Add water, in small amounts, as needed to keep from burning.
8. TRANSFER to serving plate.
9. SERVE with potatoes or pasta.

Food safety: do not wash raw chicken. Marinate in the refrigerator. Cook to 165 F (74 C), measured in the thickest part with a food thermometer. Use clean utensils and plates for cooked chicken.

USDA: Chicken from Farm to Table. Safety guidance checked October 17, 2026.