

# Fire-Roasted Wheat with Chicken

**Freekeh ma Djeaj (free-keh ma djeaj)**

**Serves 4**

Freekeh is green fire-roasted coarse-grained wheat. It is harvested while young so it retains more protein and vitamins than most other grains. Fire-roasting gives it a rich, smoky flavor. It is delicious with lamb, beef, chicken, or vegetarian style, and it is a great alternative to rice, pasta, or potatoes.

**Specialty ingredients:** Freekeh, found at specialty markets or online at [Shopkamal.com](http://Shopkamal.com)

**Prepare ahead:** You can prepare this dish up to 2 days in advance. The rich broth continues to tenderize the meat while enhancing the flavor.

## For the chicken

- 1 whole chicken (about 4 1/2 pounds)
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 4 teaspoons salt
- 1 cup diced yellow onion (1 inch)
- 1 rib celery (cut into 2-inch lengths)
- 1 (3 to 4 inch) stick cinnamon
- 6 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
- 1 teaspoon whole allspice berries
- 1 bay leaf
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

(You can substitute 3 pounds split chicken breast if you prefer all white meat, the procedure remains the same.)

## For the fire-roasted wheat

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 cups freekeh
- 4 1/2 cups hot reserved broth
- 2 cups frozen pearl onions

## To prepare the chicken

Rinse the whole chicken (or chicken breasts) in a large pot with 6 cups water and the vinegar to refresh the flavor of the chicken. Drain the water. Place the chicken, breast side facing up, in the same pot. Add to the pot with the chicken 12 cups of water and the salt. Place over high heat, uncovered, and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally to ensure the chicken does not stick. Once it comes to a rolling boil, skim and discard any foam off the top. Add the next 6 ingredients and return to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, for 45 minutes. Remove from the heat and transfer the chicken to a flat tray to cool, uncovered. Pass the broth through a fine sieve and return it to the pot (reserve all the broth). After the chicken has cooled (about 30 minutes), divide it into pieces. Remove the leg and thigh (keep them attached together as one piece, otherwise the meat will fall off the bone). Separate the whole breast from the back. Discard the back and bones. Peel and discard all the skin from all the

pieces of chicken. Break each half breast into 2 or 3 pieces lengthwise. Return the pieces of chicken to the reserved broth and sprinkle 1/8 teaspoon cinnamon over the top. Cover and set aside.

#### **To prepare the fire-roasted wheat**

Preheat the olive oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add the wheat and stir, coating the grains. Add the hot reserved broth and the frozen pearl onions. Increase the heat to high and bring to a rolling boil. Reduce the heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer 20 to 25 minutes or until the broth has been absorbed. If it seems dry, add a little more broth. Remove from the heat and set aside for 15 minutes before serving.

#### **To serve**

Arrange the wheat on a platter and the pieces of meat around the perimeter. Sprinkle some cinnamon over the pieces of meat.