

Recipes from our pub kitchen

by Amanda Pritchett

Chicken Cacciatore - an Italian style stew

There are many versions of this hunter's style stew which is part of the coq au vin family of dishes. Cook the mirepoix slowly to give proper body to the finished stew. It should never be overwhelmed with tomatoes. It would be even better with rabbit, pheasant or guinea fowl.

Ingredients (Serves 4)

1 x whole free-range chicken like a Norfolk black, cut into 8 pieces (or chicken pieces with the skin on)
350ml white wine
80ml olive oil
Mirepoix - 1 large onion chopped, 2 carrots chopped, 2 sticks celery chopped
2 cloves of garlic chopped
80g Pancetta or smoked bacon cut into lardons
200g chestnut mushrooms halved or sliced thickly
4 x tomatoes, (tinned or fresh) roughly chopped, but no juice (or fresh ones, blanched and peeled)
4 salted anchovies chopped
Handful of capers
12 - 16 olives pitted black or green
1 bunch fresh Marjoram (about 16 sprigs) - leaves removed keep the stalks (or oregano, or sage, but you'll need less)
15g dried porcini mushrooms
500ml chicken stock
Polenta - 150g coarse polenta, 750 ml water, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 25g butter, 1/2 tsp salt, pinch chilli flakes (optional) 30g grated parmesan
A little salt and black pepper

Method

Brown the chestnut mushrooms in a hot pan. Remove them to a bowl, then add the stock, the dried porcini mushrooms and any herb stalks, and bring to a simmer to reduce slightly. Season the chicken pieces, brown them in a large casserole dish, then remove and put aside on a plate. Throw the pancetta into the casserole dish and fry for half a minute before adding the Mirepoix and the garlic. Stir in a pinch of salt to release the juices, put on a lid, turn the heat right down and sweat for 10 mins stirring occasionally. Add the wine, tomatoes, olives, anchovies, half the marjoram, the strained stock and chicken legs. Cover again and simmer gently for 20 mins before adding the breast pieces and capers and continue cooking for another 20 -30 mins depending on the size of the pieces. Check the meat is cooked, taste for seasoning, stir in the chestnut mushrooms, and then leave to rest with a lid on while you cook the polenta.

Bring the milk and water to a simmer with the salt, oil and butter. Pour in the polenta while you whisk, and then when thickened use a spoon to stir every few minutes while cooking on a very low, barely bubbling heat for about 15 minutes, adding the chilli flakes if you wish. Add the parmesan and also a little more water if it becomes too thick. Check for salt, and add some black pepper.

Reheat the stew, adding the rest of the marjoram leaves.

Pour some polenta on to each plate making a dip in the middle, put 2 pieces of meat on top and spoon over the sauce.