

Coq au Vin

By Melissa Clark

YIELD 4 servings

TIME 2 1/2 hours, plus marinating

A coq au vin is a classic French stew in which chicken is braised slowly in red wine and a little brandy to yield a supremely rich sauce filled with tender meat, crisp bits of bacon, mushrooms and burnished pearl onions. Traditional recipes call for a whole cut-up chicken, but using all dark meat gives you a particularly succulent dish without the risk of overcooked white meat. However, if you would rather substitute a whole cut-up bird, just add the breasts in the last 30 minutes of simmering. If you want to skip the croutons for garnish you can, but they do add a lovely, buttery crunch alongside the soft, simmered meat and vegetables. This recipe is part of *The New Essentials of French Cooking* (<https://cooking.nytimes.com/new-essentials-french-cooking>), a guide to definitive dishes every modern cook should master.

INGREDIENTS

3 pounds chicken legs and thighs
2 ½ teaspoons kosher salt, more as needed
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, more to taste
3 cups hearty red wine, preferably from Burgundy
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme leaves
4 ounces lardons, pancetta or bacon, diced into 1/4-inch pieces (about 1 cup)
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, more as needed
1 large onion, diced
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
8 ounces white or brown mushrooms, halved if large, and sliced (about 4 cups)
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon tomato paste
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

PREPARATION

Step 1

Season chicken with 2 1/4 teaspoons salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper. In a large bowl, combine chicken, wine, bay leaf and thyme. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or, even better, overnight.

Step 2

In a large Dutch oven or a heavy-bottomed pot with a tightfitting lid, cook lardons over medium-low heat until fat has rendered, and lardons are golden and crisp, 10 to 15 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer lardons to a paper-towel-lined plate, leaving rendered fat in pot.

Step 3

Remove chicken from wine, reserving the marinade. Pat chicken pieces with paper towels until very dry. Heat lardon fat over medium heat until it's just about to smoke. Working in batches if necessary, add chicken in a single layer and cook until well browned, 3 to 5 minutes per side. (Add oil if the pot looks a little dry.) Transfer chicken to a plate as it browns.

Step 4

Add diced onion, carrot, half the mushrooms and the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt to pot. Cook until vegetables are lightly browned, about 8 minutes, stirring up any brown bits from the pot, and adjusting heat if necessary to prevent burning.

Step 5

2 tablespoons brandy

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

8 ounces peeled pearl onions (about 12 to 15 onions)

Pinch sugar

2 slices white bread, cut into triangles, crusts removed

¼ cup chopped parsley, more for serving

Stir in garlic and tomato paste and cook for 1 minute, then stir in flour and cook for another minute. Remove from heat, push vegetables to one side of pot, pour brandy into empty side, and ignite with a match. (If you're too nervous to ignite it, just cook brandy down for 1 minute.) Once the flame dies down, add reserved marinade, bring to a boil, and reduce halfway (to 1 1/2 cups), about 12 minutes. Skim off any large pockets of foam that form on the surface.

Step 6

Add chicken, any accumulated juices and half the cooked lardons to the pot. Cover and simmer over low heat for 1 hour, turning halfway through. Uncover pot and simmer for 15 minutes to thicken. Taste and add salt and pepper, if necessary.

Step 7

Meanwhile, melt 1 tablespoon butter and 2 tablespoons oil in a nonstick or other large skillet over medium-high heat. Add pearl onions, a pinch of sugar and salt to taste. Cover, reduce heat to low and cook for 15 minutes, shaking skillet often to move onions around. Uncover, push onions to one side of skillet, add remaining mushrooms, and raise heat to medium-high. Continue to cook until browned, stirring mushrooms frequently, and gently tossing onions occasionally, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove onions and mushrooms from skillet, and wipe it out.

Step 8

In same skillet, melt 2 tablespoons butter and 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat until bubbling. Add bread and toast on all sides until golden, about 2 minutes per side. (Adjust heat if needed to prevent burning.) Remove from skillet and sprinkle with salt.

Step 9

To serve, dip croutons in wine sauce, then coat in parsley. Add pearl onions, mushrooms and remaining half of the cooked lardons to the pot. Baste with wine sauce, sprinkle with parsley and serve with croutons on top.

PRIVATE NOTES

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