

COQ AU VIN

Description: Coq au Vin is a very traditional French meal. It is best served with small potatoes or over rice. This recipe takes a long time to make and you need to have patience. It is a modification of Julia Child's recipe for coq au vin. This recipe works well in a crock-pot, so it can be made a day in advance and left to simmer for hours. Serves approximately 4-6 people.

INGREDIENTS:

Butter, at least two sticks	4-5 pounds chicken, in pieces, but still on the bone, skin on
Olive oil	3 cups merlot (you can use whatever wine you like, red or white, but I use merlot, you're reducing [read: strengthening the taste of] the wine – so don't use garbage wine)
5 medium onions (or Pearl Onions)	1 shot cognac
3 cups mushrooms (I use Crimini and Shitake)	Thyme
2 cloves garlic	Bay leaves
10 strips bacon	Flour
1 small can tomato paste	Salt and pepper
1 cup beef stock	

The Onions

Cut onions into quarters, saving the tops and skins. Heat large skillet, with 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil (when melted the butter/olive oil combination should coat the inside of the pan). Add the onions and sauté until onions are brown (lightly caramelized). Add the cup of beef stock, 2 teaspoons thyme and 2 bay leaves. Simmer for approximately 40 minutes. Strain onions from stock, saving both.

The Mushrooms

De-stem 3 cups mushrooms (save the stems) and cut into 1 inch pieces. Crush and dice 2 cloves garlic (save leftover skins as well). Heat large skillet, with 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil (when melted the butter/olive oil combination should coat the inside of the pan). Sauté mushrooms and garlic for approximately 20 minutes, until tender. Remove to from heat and set aside in a bowl.

The Stock

In a sauce pan, combine stock from onions (above), saved pieces from the mushrooms (stems), onion and garlic leftovers (tops, peels, skins), 1 cup water, and 2 crushed garlic cloves. Simmer for about an hour. Strain liquid and discard any remaining large vegetable pieces.

The Chicken

Cut strips of bacon into quarter inch pieces. Heat large skillet, with 1 tablespoon butter and 1 tablespoon olive oil (when melted the butter/olive oil combination should coat the inside of the pan). Add the bacon and sauté until light brown (if bacon becomes crisp you'll have "crunchy" bits in your sauce). Remove the bacon to bowl, but save their drippings in pan. Add 1/3 stick of butter and bring bacon grease and butter to boiling. Very carefully add chicken. Brown on both sides, covering pot for each side, for around 15 minutes. If your stove has an open flame be very, very careful doing this and keep baking powder on hand in case the pan catches fire.

Putting it All Together, Part 1

Flambe with the chicken with cognac. Add the merlot, the small can of tomato paste, and the stock made previously. Simmer covered for approximately 45 minutes. Remove chicken from skillet; de-bone the chicken¹; add bones to liquid still in the skillet and simmer for approximately 40 minutes. Remove the bones and discard. Strain the stock into a saucepan and skim off the excess fat; Reduce by simmering until thicker.

Putting it All Together, Part 2: making the rue

In a separate saucepan create a rue by melting 6 tablespoons of butter. Add 6 tablespoons of flour, stirring all the time. Add stock bit by bit to rue until paste forms; add rue to stock above in small portions until desired thickness is acquired. Note: This step must be done carefully otherwise the sauce will become lumpy. Note2: Rue thickens when it nears a boil (this occurs when the flour "puffs"). The general rule is to combine cold and hot to avoid lumps (if rue is hot add cold stock). But – if you're very careful you can add hot stock to a hot rue and get away with it.

Final Preparation

If you are going to serve immediately, combine mushrooms, onions, chicken, and sauce in a large serving bowl and serve right away. If you are going to prepare in a crock-pot, combine all ingredients in the crock-pot and set to low. If preparing a day ahead, combine all above in a container, keep in the refrigerator overnight, and heat the following day in a crock pot set to low. Re-heating by this method takes about 7 hours.

¹ Traditionally, coq au vin is served with the chicken on the bone, but this is difficult to eat, so I de-bone the chicken in this recipe.