



INGREDIENTS

- 100g butter
- 100g speck, cut into 1cm dice
- 12 tiny onions, peeled (see below)
- 250g button mushrooms, halved
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 x 1.5kg chicken
- 2 tablespoons plain flour
- 30ml brandy
- 1½ cups dry white wine
- 1 cup water
- 3 sprigs thyme
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- Salt flakes and freshly ground white pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- Crusty bread, for serving

If you can't get tiny pickling onions, use small spring onions.

Coq au Vin

This was one of the first French dishes I ever cooked, and it seemed terribly sophisticated in the early '80s. Literally 'rooster in wine', it's a classic braise of chicken, onion, mushrooms and speck, sometimes thickened with the chicken's blood (but not in my case). It's most often associated with Burgundy but made all over France using whatever white or red wine is local to the region. In Jura they use vin jaune (and local morels), while in Alsace it's usually riesling. I prefer white wine and like to cook and serve it in a bright cast-iron baking dish. Buy an organic chicken, it really is worth the extra expense, and drink whatever wine you cook it in, I went Alsatian with Arthur Metz pinot gris. Bon appétit!

Serves 4

METHOD

1. Melt butter in a large saucepan or cast-iron baking dish over medium heat.
2. Add speck and onions and cook for 5-10 minutes, stirring often, until all lightly coloured.
3. Stir in mushrooms, garlic and a good pinch of salt, and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, for 5-10 minutes, until mushrooms are tender and give off some juices.
4. Meanwhile, cut chicken into 10 pieces (wings, drumsticks, thighs and 4 pieces of breast). Pat skin dry.
5. Using a slotted spoon, remove onions, mushroom and speck from the pan and set aside.
6. Working in batches, add chicken pieces to the pan and cook over medium-high heat for about 5 minutes, turning so they're coloured all over. Remove from pan and set aside.
7. Add flour to the pan and stir for a minute or so, scraping the base of the pan well.
8. Add brandy and stir for 30 seconds, then add wine and stir until it boils and thickens slightly, stirring well to remove any bits that are stuck to the bottom or sides of the pan (that's where all the flavour is).
9. Add water, thyme, bay leaf, salt and pepper and stir until it returns to the boil.
10. Return chicken, mushroom, onions, speck and any juices to the pan, submerging the chicken in the liquid as much as possible.
11. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for about 30 minutes, until chicken is cooked through, turning it occasionally if it's not fully submerged.
12. Stir in parsley, taste and add more salt if needed.
13. Serve with crusty bread.