



Basque-style Octopus Braise

This recipe is inspired by a Basque veal braise from the town of Espelette, famous for its dried mild red peppers. I wanted to create a pescatarian-friendly version, but it's always challenging finding seafood that can stand up to a long braise; so few aquatic species lend themselves to that style of cooking. Octopus – and its cephalopod cousins squid and cuttlefish – are the exceptions. You could also simply cook the sauce without the octopus, uncovered, for 20 minutes or so then serve it over a pan-fried piece of fish.

Serves 2–4



INGREDIENTS

- 300g baby octopus
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 brown onion, finely diced
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- Salt flakes, to taste
- 1 red capsicum, diced
- 2 pale green bullhorn chillies, diced
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 teaspoon ground Piment d'Espelette, plus extra for serving
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup water, more or less, to cover
- Steamed parsley potatoes, for serving

METHOD

1. Clean octopus; cut head and tentacles into bite-sized pieces.
2. Place in a heat-proof bowl, cover with boiling water and set aside for a minute or so, then set aside in a colander to drain well.
3. Heat the oil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat.
4. Add onion, garlic and a good pinch of salt and cook, covered, over medium heat for about 5 minutes, until starting to soften.
5. Add capsicum, bullhorn chilli and a little more salt, and cook, covered, for about 8 minutes, stirring often, until tender. Remove lid, increase heat to high and cook for a further minute or 2 until just starting to colour.
6. Stir in octopus, thyme, half the parsley and half the Piment d'Espelette.
7. Add wine, increase heat to high, stir well to remove any bits stuck to the bottom of the pan and boil for a minute or so.
8. Add water, return to the boil, press octopus down to submerge it as much as possible, reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for about 20 minutes.
9. Uncover and simmer for a further 20 minutes or so, until octopus is tender.
10. Increase heat to medium and boil for 5-10 minutes, until enough liquid has evaporated to give a saucy consistency.
11. Taste and add salt, remaining Piment d'Espelette and remaining parsley.
12. Serve with steamed potatoes and extra Piment d'Espelette for sprinkling.