

Coq au Cidre – Serves 4

This dish is a variation on the classic Coq au Vin from France and literally means cock bird with wine. Traditionally the male or cock would have been used rather than chicken and their blood would have been used to thicken the sauce but they are rarely available in the UK nowadays. Red wine is traditional, but if you like, you could use dry white wine or dry cider instead, as I've done here.

I've simplified the recipe here to make the process a bit quicker and easier. You could cook this in a pan on the stove on low instead of in the oven.

Ingredients

1 medium chicken, cut into pieces
1 pint chicken stock
1/2 pint dry or medium dry cider
6 button mushrooms
6 baby onions
10g butter
10g plain flour
1 tablespoon veg oil
100g pancetta or streaky bacon, cubed
1 fat clove of garlic
1 bay leaf
1 sprig thyme
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

Heat the butter and oil in a frying pan.

Coat the chicken pieces, a few at a time, in seasoned flour and fry on all sides until golden. Don't over-crowd the pan.

Place the chicken pieces in a casserole dish. Brown the bacon cubes in the pan and then add to the chicken.
Brown the onions in the pan and then add to the chicken.

When we prepare this dish in the restaurant we marinade the chicken in the red wine first, leave overnight and then braise in the wine and stock vegetables the next day. The chicken and vegetables would then be removed and the stock would be reduced before adding the browned onions, mushrooms and bacon combo and then serving with the chicken.

Crush the garlic and place, with the bay leaf and thyme, among the chicken pieces.

Add the cider and chicken stock so that the chicken is covered with liquid.

Cover with a lid or foil and then cook in the oven at 160c for about 45 mins. In the last 10 minutes, add the browned mushrooms and continue to cook with the lid off.

Have a look at the sauce now and, if it is not thick enough, remove the chicken, bacon, onions and mushrooms and set aside. You can take the bay leaf and thyme out and throw away. You can pass the liquid through a sieve if you like. Then, in a saucepan on a medium/high heat, reduce the sauce to the desired consistency.

Return the chicken, bacon, mushrooms and onions to the sauce and heat through to make sure everything is hot.

Serve with mashed potato, new potatoes or rice and some vegetables, if you like.

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