

Faisan à la Normande

Following a very successful New Year trip to Normandy and being slap bang in the middle of game season, this seemed like a particularly appropriate dinner party dish.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	20 mins
cooking time:	75 mins

Ingredients

1 tbs olive oil
100g butter
2 pheasants, prepared and trussed
1 large shallot or small onion, finely chopped
3 eating apples
50ml calvados
100ml dry cider
150ml crème fraîche
salt & pepper

Method

In a pan large enough to hold both pheasants (an oval casserole usually works well), melt 25g of the butter in the oil and brown the birds as evenly as possible all over. Remove the birds and set them aside. If the pan contains burnt residue, wipe it out.

Core and peel two of the apples and cut each into eighths. Melt 50g butter in the casserole and sweat the shallot and apple wedges, without colouring them, for about five minutes. Return the pheasants to the pan breast side up. Warm the calvados slightly in a small pan and set it alight before carefully pouring it, flaming, over the pheasants and apple mixture. Shake the pan until the flames die down. Pour in the cider and bring it to simmering point. Cover the casserole, lower the heat and cook it gently for 45 minutes in all. After 15 minutes, turn the pheasants onto one breast and continue cooking and, after a further 15 minutes, turn them onto the other breast for the final 15 minutes.

While the pheasants are cooking, core and peel the remaining apple and cut 4 thick circles (across the core). Fry the apple circles in the remaining 25g butter. Sprinkle them with a little sugar to glaze them. Set aside to garnish.

After 45 minutes, remove the pheasants and keep them warm while you finish the sauce. Increase the heat and boil the cooking juices to reduce them a little and concentrate the flavours. While the sauce is reducing, joint the pheasants (breasts, thighs and drumsticks) and put the pieces on a warmed serving plate. Blitz the contents of the pan to puree the apples and shallot and make a smooth sauce. Stir in the cream and heat gently before adjusting the seasoning to taste.

Pour a little of the sauce around the pheasant pieces and top each breast with one of the glazed apple circles. Serve the remaining sauce separately.