

Braised Pigs' Cheeks

Pigs' cheeks had become quite popular in Spain before we got locked out due to Covid-19. I don't see them very often in the UK but we did find some in a butcher located inside a local garden centre, so here's how we tried them.

This began life as a Spanish recipe imported by Nigel Slater but I've naturally had a slight fiddle with it. The original served four using eight cheeks cooked in a whole bottle of robust red wine as the liquid. Personally I prefer to reduce the heftiness of the red wine so my approach lightens the red wine with chicken stock. The choice is, of course, yours. Since our pack contained only four cheeks, the liquid is also reduced.

Mainly because I don't care for cooked-to-death carrots, I also chose to blitz the sauce, which lends itself very well to being mopped up with mashed potato.

Planning

serves:	2
prep time:	15 mins
cooking time:	3 hrs

Ingredients

olive oil
4 pigs' cheeks
1 white onion, roughly chopped
1 red onion, roughly chopped
2 carrots, roughly diced
2 sticks celery, roughly diced
4 cloves garlic, halved
1 tbs flour
2 bay leaf
6cm strip orange rind
250ml red wine
250ml chicken stock
6-ish sprigs fresh thyme
Salt & pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to 150°C/gas 2.

Heat a tablespoons of olive oil in a casserole (one that has a lid) over medium heat. Season the cheeks then brown them on both sides in the oil. Transfer the cheeks to a plate while you deal with the vegetables.

In the same pan, adding a little more oil if necessary, sweat together the carrots, onions, celery, garlic and orange rind. Once the onions begin to colour just a little, return the reserved cheeks to the pan. Stir in the tablespoon of flour, then pour in the wine. Continue stirring as you bring it to a simmer to drive off the alcohol. Now add the chicken stock, thyme and bay leaves and stir well again.

Cover with the lid and pop it in the oven to simmer gently for 2½hrs.

You can serve it now or, as I did, put the cheeks onto your serving plates, then remove the herbs and orange rind before blitzing the vegetables and braising liquid together.