

Wood Pigeon with forcemeat Balls

Wood pigeons have dark red flesh with a naturally mild gamey flavour and are inexpensive. One bird is ample for one person. This recipe was my introduction to pigeons and is still my favourite. Casseroling them whole in this fashion keeps them moist and helps tenderize potentially older birds.

Planning

serves:	4
prep time:	30 mins
cooking time:	1½ hrs

Ingredients

4 wood pigeons, oven ready
4 oz smoked streaky bacon
1 oz. butter
1 tbs plain flour
15 fl oz hot chicken stock
1 bouquet garni
12 button onions, peeled
8 oz button mushrooms,
wiped and quartered
4 oz fresh white
breadcrumbs
2 oz shredded beef suet
3 tbs chopped fresh parsley
grated rind of ½ lemon
2 small eggs
salt & pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas 4.

Remove the rind from the bacon, dice it and fry it in the melted butter until it crispens. Remove the bacon pieces with a slotted spoon and drain them on kitchen paper. Brown the pigeons evenly in the fat then transfer them to a casserole.

Drain all but two tablespoons of fat from the pan; stir in the flour and cook gently until it browns lightly. Gradually blend in the hot stock, raise the sauce to simmering point and cook for a few minutes. Strain the sauce over the pigeons. Add the bacon pieces, a little salt and pepper and the bouquet garni. Add the whole peeled onions. Cover the casserole with the lid and cook in the centre of the oven for 1 hour. Turn the pigeons a few times during cooking.

Meanwhile, make the forcemeat balls. Put the breadcrumbs, suet, parsley and lemon rind into a mixing bowl and season with pepper and salt. Beat the eggs lightly and stir them into the dry ingredients to form a moist mixture. Form the mixture into walnut-sized balls.

After the hour, add the mushrooms and forcemeat balls to the casserole, replace the lid and cook for a further 15-20 minutes. Remove the bouquet garni, arrange the pigeons on a serving plate surrounded by the onions, mushrooms and forcemeat balls and serve.