



Slow baked wild rabbit, saffron, coriander & shallot confit smoked bacon, fondant winter vegetables

A great tasting slow cooked dish with superb flavours and melting textures, just perfect for a chilly winter lunch or dinner and it looks just superb!

Use wild whole rabbit, portioned

Serves 4

Ingredients

500ml light olive oil

2 heads garlic, broken into individual cloves with papery skin left on, AND 4 cloves peeled and lightly crushed

2 sprigs fresh thyme

200g smoked dry cure streaky bacon or pancetta slab, cut into soldiers 25mm wide – fat lardon shapes

1 rabbit, chopped into 8 portions, keeping all on the bone

30g to 50g plain flour for dredging, seasoned with 2tblsp salt and 1 tblsp fresh ground black pepper

3 banana shallots, 1 medium carrot and 1 stick of celery, all finely diced

400ml good fresh chicken stock

350ml good dry cider or white wine

Spices: 4 tsp coriander seeds - 3tsp lightly crushed, 1tsp fine ground - two pinches saffron threads, about 15 stigma per pinch

150g each of celeriac, carrots and parsnip, peeled and chopped to even 20mm dice

300g Jerusalem artichokes, peeled and chopped to even quarters lengthwise

1 medium Bramley apple, peeled and cored, cut into 12 even wedges

75g unsalted best butter

2 large ripe tomatoes, peeled, deseeded and finely diced

Good handful of curly parsley, chopped and some coriander pluches, (leaves on short trimmed stalks)

Method

1. Set your oven to 140°C, Gas mark 1
2. In a small casserole, heat the oil until just warm, drop in the unpeeled garlic cloves and thyme then pop in the bacon. As soon as it starts to bubble, pop in the oven to gently cook for 1 hour until all soft and tender.
3. Remove and reserve the bacon and garlic cloves, strain through a fine sieve discarding the thyme. Put the oil aside for later.
4. Turn your oven up to 160°C, Gas mark 3
5. Place the rabbit portions on a plate and dredge in the seasoned flour
6. Take a fry pan, add 4 tblsp of the confit oil and gently sauté the rabbit pieces in batches until they're just lightly coloured, then place them in a shallow roasting dish just big enough to hold the pieces comfortably
7. Using the same fry pan, fry the dice of 1 shallot, the carrot and celery stick on a medium high heat until they're just coloured, then add them to the roasting tray
8. Pour in 200ml chicken stock, the cider add the 4 peeled garlic cloves, 3tsp of the crushed coriander seed and a good pinch of saffron
9. Cover the roasting dish with foil tightly, pop in the oven and gently bake for 45 minutes, then remove to a plate. Set aside and allow to cool.
10. Strain the cooking juices through a fine sieve into a large saucepan, gently pressing the vegetables in the sieve to make sure all juices are captured, then discard the cooked vegetables.
11. Pop the saucepan onto a medium heat, add 50g butter, bring to a gentle bubble, add the chunky dice vegetables and par-cook until just yielding when skewered with a sharp knife, about 7 to 8 minutes.
12. Strain the vegetables and reserve them, retain the buttery juices pouring them into a medium sauce pan.

Assembly

1. Place the rabbit on a baking tray then into a medium hot oven to just gently re-heat, don't cook it
2. Gently fry the Bramley segments, par-cooked vegetables, confit bacon and garlic cloves in a little more of the reserved "confit oil" and a knob of butter so beautifully glazed and golden, (the apple should still be slightly crunchy) rectify the seasoning, remove from the pan with slotted spoon onto absorbent paper - keep warm
3. Take the saucepan of buttery juices, add the very finely chopped banana shallots, the remaining 200ml of chicken stock, the second pinch of saffron and the 1 tsp fine ground coriander seed, pop onto a medium heat, bring to a gentle simmer and cook for 4 to 5 minutes so the shallots retain a little bite, then add a little of the remaining 25g cold butter so the sauce just thickens.
4. Finally, add the diced tomato concasse to the shallot sauce and the finely chopped curly parsley
5. Place the vegetables on a heated charger then the rabbit pieces, bacon, apple, and garlic arranged with finesse, pour over sauce then finally dot the coriander 'pluches' on top. Enjoy!

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