

Recipe: Classic poultry dish re-interpreted for Zonnebloem

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One for the pot and one for us

This week's 'weekend recipe' sponsored by Prestons Liquor Stores is inspired by Zonnebloem's plush, plummy Merlot.

Food fundi Andy Fenner has re-interpreted an old French farmhouse favourite. Instead of chicken, he uses quail for this superb, slow-cooked dish that will have everyone fighting for the last drop of sauce made with a full bottle of the wine.

The Merlot's red fruit, chocolate and mocha tastes give depth and substance to the dish. To make the most of the meal, echo those delicious flavours by serving another bottle of the beautifully layered and soft-textured red from one of South Africa's favourite cellars.

Quail au Vin, with Zonnebloem Merlot 2013

Ingredients

3 whole quails, cut into bite-sized portions by your butcher (or you can do this easily at home), and keep the carcasses aside for the stock (Quail is available at Continental Butchery)

1 onion, 1 carrot and 6 whole black peppercorns (for the stock)

150g pancetta

30g butter

2 medium onions, peeled and roughly chopped

1 large carrot, roughly chopped

2 sticks celery, thoroughly washed and roughly chopped



2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely sliced
2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons cognac
1 bottle Zonnebloem Merlot 2013
4 to 5 small sprigs of thyme
3 bay leaves
40g additional butter
12 small cocktail onions (or shallots), peeled and quartered
200g small mushrooms

Method

Put the quail carcasses into a deep pan, cover with water, add the onion, the carrot, six whole peppercorns and bring to the boil. Turn the heat down and let it simmer until you need it.

Meanwhile, cut the *pancetta* into short strips. Place with the butter, into a thick-bottomed casserole dish and gently cook over moderate heat. Stir, from time to time (it mustn't burn). When golden, remove and place into a bowl, leaving behind the fat in the casserole.

Season the quail pieces with salt and pepper to taste and place them in the hot fat in the casserole. Turn them when the skin begins to get a nice golden colour. Be careful not to burn the skin (this is crucial to the end flavour of the dish). When you're happy with the colour of the meat, lift the quail out and add to the bowl with the *pancetta*.

Add the onions and carrot to the casserole and cook slowly, stirring from time to time, until the onion is translucent and it has gone some way to dissolving some of the casserole juices. Add the garlic. Return the quail and *pancetta* to the casserole, stir in the flour and let everything cook for a minute or two before pouring in the cognac and wine.

Add the herbs and spoon in ladles of the simmering stock until the entire dish is covered. Bring to the boil and then quickly turn the heat down so that the sauce bubbles gently. Cover partially with a lid.

Melt the additional butter in a small pan. Add the small peeled onions and then the mushrooms. Allow to cook until golden and then add to the casserole with a seasoning of salt and pepper. Check the quail after 40 minutes to see how tender it is. Turn the heat up and let the sauce reduce and thicken. It should be glossy. Garnish with parsley and serve with crusty bread to mop up the sauce.