



Drunken chicken

Here's the busy person's version of the French classic, Coq au Vin

YOU won't get a rooster easily in Singapore, but that apart, there are plenty of nice birds you can throw into the pot for a wonderfully aromatic chicken cooked in red wine.

The French claim to that dish is, of course, the classic Coq au Vin, a chicken-bacon stew that is deliciously rich in flavour but takes about two hours' labour in the kitchen.

When I first experimented with Coq au Vin and tried it on the family, my delighted uncle asked me in surprise:

"Hey, how come you know how to cook a Hakka dish?"

I was just as taken aback. I thought I was serving him a French special. He later told

me his mother, a Hakka, often served a very similar dish, which was chicken cooked in Chinese red wine.

I have always known both French and Chinese cuisines share a lot of common ground – both in treatment of ingredients and in methods.

But these days, I think another type of cuisine is emerging – more suited for the busy person.

Call it city-quick cuisine, perhaps, but what it does mean is that it suits people like you and I, who want to eat good food but don't want to slave over the counter-top for hours.

I love to cook and I love to eat.

Cooking is a vanishing skill because people think the kitchen arts are just too difficult. Also, eating out is almost too convenient these days.

To me, cooking is an expression of love for those nearest and dearest.

You should never be too busy to show you care enough. Life is short, yeah?

To make it all easier, there are also new products on the shelves all the time to help the busy cook.

And over the next few weeks, I'll take you shopping and point out nice new stuff for you to try.

For example, take the chestnuts I've used in my recipe this week. They come ready shelled, peeled and packed in a re-usable glass jar. And they cost just \$4.50 from Carrefour.

My version of red wine chicken allows you to cheat a little.

Marinate the chicken overnight, throw all the ingredients in a pot and leave in the fridge. In the evening when you come home, the meat is bursting with flavour, and you only need to brown, braise and serve.

E-mail me if you have questions.



by
Pauline
D Loh

pauline@newstoday.com.sg

Red Wine Chicken with Chestnuts and Buttered Mushrooms

Ingredients:

1 bottle Bordeaux
1 large chicken, cut in pieces
10 red shallots, peeled, whole
5 cloves garlic, peeled, whole
3 sticks cinnamon
1 jar cooked chestnuts
A handful of raisins
Salt, sugar to taste

Method:

1. Marinate chicken pieces, cinnamon, garlic and onions in the red wine for at least an hour or overnight.
2. Drain chicken pieces, garlic, onions and cinnamon. Reserve the liquid.
3. Discard cinnamon. Brown onions, garlic and chicken in a little oil in non-stick wok.
4. Put browned meat into a large pot or casserole and add the red wine marinade. It should cover

the chicken pieces. Add chestnuts when mixture boils.
5. Simmer another 15 minutes till chicken is cooked, but not falling to bits.
6. Season with salt and a little sugar to taste. Garnish with raisins. Serve with bread or rice.

BUTTERED MUSHROOMS

Ingredients:

20 button mushrooms
1 tablespoon butter
Sea salt

Method:

1. Remove stems from mushrooms. Clean.
2. Melt butter in frying pan and add mushroom caps. Fry till caps are slightly golden and fragrant.
3. Sprinkle a little salt over. Serve with chicken and a little green salad or mashed potatoes.

Notes:

Choose a moderately priced red wine that is pretty robust. The alcohol evaporates during cooking but the flavour stays. This is also a good way of using up left-over reds from a party.

The canned chestnuts are convenient. These are French chestnuts and they cook well. If using local or Chinese chestnuts, add them a little later or they will disintegrate in the cooking.

Shopping List:

1 bottle Bordeaux (\$12.50)
1 large chicken (\$8.00)
10 red shallots (\$0.80)
5 cloves garlic (\$0.30)
3 sticks cinnamon (\$0.50)
1 jar cooked chestnuts (\$4.50)

I bought the wine and chestnuts from Carrefour. The supermarket has a really nice range of red wines that is very affordable and good for cooking.



Wine cellar collectibles

THE wine shelves at Carrefour have a wide range not just from France, but from all the up and coming "new world" vineyards such as Chile, and South Africa. During the coming French Festival, the gentlemen at Carrefour have set aside a few bottles for collectors, for those who want to lay down a few bottles for future reference.

Chateau Smith Haut Lafite (\$65, Pessac Leognan 99)

This young Bordeaux shows intense aromas of wet earth, stone and berries. It's full-bodied, with well-integrated tannins and a long, long finish. Best after 2008.

Chateau La Mission Haut Brion

(\$140, Pessac Leognan 97)

A tight and muscular young wine. Very floral on the nose, with gorgeous berry and cherry flavours. Full-bodied, with silky tannins and a fresh and fruity finish. Best after 2008.

Chateau La Gaffeliere St Emillion 99

(\$74.90) A big, porty, raisiny wine. Very ripe plum, and hints of mineral and spice on the nose. Full-bodied, thick and rich. Slightly hot finish. Rather rustic, but impressive. Best after 2006.



On the shelf

Organic chocolate hazelnut cookies sound as if they were made in heaven. And when they are only \$2.50 per pack, then it's sheer foodie paradise.

Where to find them? Head for the organic food section in Carrefour supermarket. But be warned. You may end up buying more than just the cookies.

