

# Coq au Vin

## *Rooster Cooked in Red Wine*

WHEREVER THERE'S A CHICKEN FARM, there's a recipe for old chickens in a pot. Of course, this recipe, at least in name, demands the use of an old rooster who has outlived his usefulness on the farm.

Sadly, making true *coq au vin* with a rooster in this country poses a distinct challenge to the cook, in these days of the modern, tender supermarket chicken. But you still have some options available to make something close to the original.

For more flavor, you can use a stewing hen or fowl, which many specialty markets and even larger grocery stores carry for making soup and stock. The meat will be tougher, of course, but the long cooking time for *coq au vin* results in tender, melt-in-your-mouth textures.

What if there are no roosters, or even stewing hens, available to you? Although you won't really be making a *coq au vin*, you can prepare a version of this dish with a good-quality free-range chicken and shorten the cooking time. While red wine is the right choice for older birds (with sturdier bones) because they have more flavor, younger, more delicate chickens are best prepared with white wine and the bacon omitted to prepare *poulet au vin blanc*. Serve this dish with buttered noodles, or boiled or mashed potatoes.

### SERVES 6 TO 8 AS A MAIN COURSE

*1 rooster, stewing hen, or stewing fowl (about 6 lb)*

*1 carrot, chopped*

*1 celery stalk, chopped*

*1 medium onion, chopped roughly*

*5 oz slab bacon or pancetta, unsliced*

*1 tsp unsalted butter*

*Salt and pepper as needed*

*24 pearl onions, peeled*

*12 small white mushrooms, whole (about the size of the pearl onions)*

*1 medium onion, cut into large dice*

*2 carrots, cut into large dice*

*1 celery stalk, cut into large dice*

*3 garlic cloves*

*2 tbsp all-purpose flour, toasted\**

*2 tbsp brandy*

*1 bottle full-bodied red wine (750 ml)*

*3 sprigs thyme*

*2 bay leaves*

*1 tbsp butter*

\*For recipes and information about substitutions, see *Fonds de Cuisine*, page 175.



1. Cut the rooster into 8 serving pieces. Reserve the breast and leg pieces and use the back, wings, and giblets to prepare a stock.

2. To make the stock, add the back, wings, and giblets (except the liver) to a small stockpot with the chopped carrot, celery stalk, and onion. Cover the contents with cool water and bring it to a very low simmer. Simmer for about 2 hours. Skim the surface occasionally to remove impurities. This stock will be used later in the dish, so keep it warm on the stove until you need it, in step 7.

3. Cut the bacon or pancetta into lardons (see page 178). Unsmoked bacon is preferable to give the final dish a cleaner flavor, but smoked bacon is better than no bacon. Put the lardons into an enameled, 5½-quart cast-iron casserole with 1 teaspoon of butter. Cook gently on medium-low heat until the fat is rendered and the pancetta or bacon is medium brown but not yet crispy, about 6 minutes. Remove the lardons with a slotted spoon and set them aside to drain on a paper towel.

4. Season the rooster pieces on both sides with salt and pepper, and brown them in the pork fat on medium heat, about 4 minutes on each side. Don't crowd the pan, but more importantly, don't scorch the fond that is forming; it will be the basis of the sauce. Remove the browned rooster pieces and set them aside on a warm plate. Remove all but 2 tablespoons of the fat in the pan, and reserve what you removed.

5. In the same casserole, sear the pearl onions and mushrooms separately until lightly browned. Remove with a slotted spoon and transfer to bowls; reserve. Add the diced onion, carrot, and celery to the casserole and cook on

medium until the onion is deep brown, about 10 to 12 minutes. Crush the garlic cloves with the side of a chef's knife, pull away the peels, and add them to the casserole. Cook the mix until the garlic is fragrant, about 3 minutes.

6. Sift the flour into the vegetables. Cook until evenly combined (it will look a little pasty), 1 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and let it cool for about 5 minutes. Deglaze with the brandy and wine, stirring to loosen any drippings that have begun to stick to the pan, and evenly blend in the flour. Add the thyme and bay leaves, and return the rooster (with its juices) and lardons to the pan.

7. Add the stock to the casserole so it just covers the rooster pieces. Bring the stock to a boil, then lower the heat to establish a simmer. Cook, partially covered, for 1 hour, then add the pearl onions and cook another 45 minutes. When the rooster is tender, but not falling off the bone, remove the pieces and keep warm. Reduce the sauce to a slightly syrupy consistency, about 10 minutes, and swirl in 1 tablespoon of butter. Add the mushrooms and return the rooster to the sauce to heat it through.

8. Serve the rooster pieces coated with the sauce and the vegetables.



**BEVERAGE:**

Whatever red wine you put in the stew, pick a more expensive version of that wine, or grape, to put in the glasses. For example, if you used Côtes du Rhône for cooking, serve your rooster with a Gigondas or Saint-Joseph.