

Cooking con Clotilde Feb/March 2005

Chambord Bavarian

This past Christmas I stumbled into this recipe as I was looking for a light dessert for Christmas dinner. Since I love raspberries, I altered the original recipe to emphasize them over strawberries. The smooth Bavarian is enriched by the delightful touch of Chambord, which highlights both fruits. This dish would be wonderful for any holiday, but after a harsh winter, it is ideal for Easter. Serve some extra dry Champagne with it for a festive touch.

3 ounces raspberry-flavored gelatin
3 ounces strawberry-flavored gelatin
1 ½ cups boiling water
1 cup sour cream
1 pint strawberry or raspberry ice cream (not sherbet)
½ cup Chambord
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
Two 10 ounce packages frozen raspberries
One 10 ounce package frozen strawberries

Sweetened whipped cream

1. Place gelatin in large bowl. Add boiling water and stir to dissolve.
2. Add sour cream and beat with wire whisk, until smooth.
3. Cut ice cream into the gelatin mixture. Stir until melted and smooth.
4. Add Chambord, lemon juice and frozen fruit, discarding syrup and breaking fruit into small pieces using a fork.
5. Pour mixture into soufflé dish or 8 long stemmed flutes (9 ounce) or dessert dishes.
6. Top with sweetened whipped cream. Refrigerate until serving time.

8-12 servings

Seco Puertorriqueño

Originally a Peruvian stew, this is one of my all-time favorite recipes. It is an ideal winter dish, hearty and full-flavored. Serve it with rice and plenty of hot, French bread, since you shouldn't waste a drop of that sauce. Go to South America for the wine: Chile and Argentina should have lots of good choices. I recommend a big Chilean red, such as Concha y Toro's famed Casillero del Diablo or a Cousino Macul Cabernet Sauvignon. These are full-bodied wines, with enough fruit and complexity to stand up against the herbal/lemon/garlic flavors of this earthy dish.

3 pounds beef chuck, cut into 1 inch cubes

(For marinade):

1 cup red wine
Sea salt and pepper to taste

(For sauté):

4 tablespoons olive oil
6 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 cup strong beef stock

2 cups fresh cilantro leaves, chopped (discard stems)
Juice of 3 big limes
2 pounds boiled potatoes, peeled and cut in quarters

1. Forty eight hours before cooking, season meat with sea salt and black pepper and place in a non reactive container. Add wine to meat in container. Cover and refrigerate, turning meat every 12 hours.
2. Two hours before cooking, bring meat to room temperature. Save wine marinade and set aside. Pat meat dry with paper towels.
3. In a large saucepan or *caldero*, heat olive oil until bubbly. Sauté chopped garlic, chopped onion and cayenne pepper over medium heat for 10 minutes. Set aside.
4. In the same saucepan, brown beef cubes in remaining oil, making sure all are browned evenly. Add stock to beef, check for salt and pepper; add chopped cilantro and garlic/onion mixture. Stir; bring to a boil over medium heat, lower heat and begin to simmer.
5. Cook and simmer, partially covered, and stirring every 15 minutes, for two hours. Add potatoes and lime juice and stir, bringing stew to a slow boil. Cook for 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Serve over rice.

Yield: 6-8 generous portions

Sofrito-Marinated Steak

An easy recipe to make, this flavorful flank steak is appealing to lovers of Spanish Caribbean food throughout the seasons. You can grill it in the summer or broil it in the winter. Red wine enthusiasts will have a field day here.

For the sofrito steak, one can either go with an elegant, dry Spanish red, such as Figaro or Ribera del Duero, or opt for a full flavor explosion of the kind found in the Coppola Zinfandel.

1 pound flank steak, scored (crosshatched) on both sides by the butcher

(for sofrito):

1 large onion, peeled and cut into 1 inch pieces
1 green bell pepper, cored and seeded, cut into 1 inch pieces
1 red bell pepper, cored and seeded, cut into 1 inch pieces
1 large bunch cilantro leaves, chopped (discard stems)
6 cloves garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons sea salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. For the *sofrito*, puree onion, bell pepper s, cilantro and garlic in a food processor; add olive oil, salt and pepper. If you don't have a food processor, grind ingredients into a mortar with a pestle or chop the vegetables into small pieces, and place in blender with olive oil until pureed.
2. Spread 1 cup of the *sofrito* over the scored flank steak, working the puree into the meat's crosshatching with your fingers. Allow the meat to marinate at room temperature for 2-3 hours.
3. Prepare a grill or broiler; grill or broil the meat to the desired doneness, about 8 minutes per side for medium-rare. Let flank steak rest for five minutes before slicing diagonally.

Yield: 2 generous servings; 4 regular servings

Note: This recipe makes 2 cups of *sofrito*. Use 1 cup for this recipe and refrigerate or freeze the rest for use in another dish. You can always double the recipe and get a larger piece of flank steak, which will feed more hungry people.

Carnero de Pascua (Easter Lamb)

This recipe is ideal for an Easter Sunday celebration. Originally from Argentina, it acquires its distinctive minty flavoring from the dried mint leaves used in the marinade. The Argentinean Malbec used for the marinade lends it a fruity taste that should please everyone. Serve it with string beans and new potatoes in butter sauce, to greet the incoming spring. To drink? More Malbec! If you want to splurge, serve Caro 2001 from the House of Rothschild-Argentina, a Cabernet-Malbec blend that is a bit pricey, but has generated a lot of enthusiasm among wine aficionados for its complexity, and suitability for zesty dishes such as this one.

1 leg of lamb (6-8 pounds) with bone in

(for marinade):

3 tablespoons black peppercorns
1 tablespoon white peppercorns
3 tablespoons dried mint leaves
1 tablespoon Spanish paprika
1 teaspoon hot red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon Kosher salt
1/3 cup olive oil
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 leg of lamb (6-8 pounds) with bone in
8 large garlic cloves, thinly slivered

(for cooking):

12 large garlic cloves, mashed
1 large carrot, peeled and cut into chunks
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
2 cups beef stock
2 cups red Argentinean wine (Malbec)

1. The day before cooking the lamb, prepare the marinade.
2. Using a spice grinder, grind black and white peppercorns with mint leaves into a coarse powder. In a non-reactive bowl, whisk ground mixture with paprika, pepper flakes, salt, oil and vinegar.
3. With a small, sharp kitchen knife, make deep slits all over the lamb. Dip garlic slivers into the oil/spice mixture and stuff them into the slits. Continue until you use up all the slivered garlic.
4. Rub the remaining oil mixture all over the lamb. Place the lamb in a large, shallow dish. Cover it with plastic wrap and marinate in the refrigerator overnight. One hour before roasting, bring lamb to room temperature.
5. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
6. In a large roasting pan, place carrot, onion and mashed garlic. Place lamb on a roasting rack in the pan and roast for 30 minutes. Lower oven temperature to 350 degrees F. Pour beef stock and one cup wine into the pan. Roast lamb for one hour.

7. If the lamb crust begins to brown too much, cover loosely with aluminum foil. Pour the second cup of wine into the pan and roast for another hour for medium lamb. (For rare, roast for 30 minutes). Cook as desired or use a meat thermometer.
8. During the last 15 minutes of roasting, raise oven temperature to 450 degrees F. Remove the foil.
9. Remove lamb from oven and place it on serving platter. Let it stand for 15 minutes. Cover loosely with foil.
10. Degrease pan juices. Pass solids through a sieve into a saucepan. Add degreased juices to strained solids and reduce over high heat for 5 minutes. Transfer the sauce to a sauceboat and serve over sliced lamb.

Yield: 12-16 servings

Basic Arroz Imperial con Pollo (Imperial Rice with Chicken)

This is a popular recipe among Miami-based Cubans. It is ideal for a luncheon, or even for a brunch, because it is light, yet flavorful. While it is labor-intensive, the results are well worth the work. Cheese and chicken have a natural affinity for each other, which is enhanced by the addition of garlic, onions and oregano. Using mayonnaise as a binder results in a velvety consistency. This is great comfort food! I would serve an Argentinean Merlot Trumpeter if I want red wine, or a Beringer Alluvium white. The Alluvium is a plush and generous white wine, with hints of melon and quince.

3 pounds chicken thighs, skin on
2 quarts water

(for cooking):

4 strips bacon, cut into slivers
½ teaspoon olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 green bell pepper, cored, seeded and chopped
3 green onions (scallions), trimmed and chopped
½ teaspoon oregano
6 large garlic cloves, minced
3 ounces tomato sauce
2 tablespoons dry sherry
½ cup green peas (frozen; do not substitute!)
1 can chopped pimientos, drained
Juice of one medium lime
Salt and pepper to taste
4 cups long grain rice
8 cups chicken broth (from the cooked chicken, above)
2 teaspoons Bijol™ or mild Spanish paprika
7 tablespoons mayonnaise
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
2 cups (8 ounces) shredded Monterrey Jack or other mild white cheese, such as Muenster

1. Wash chicken and place in large saucepan or stock pot. Add two quarts water to fully cover meat. Bring to a boil and simmer, uncovered, until the meat is tender and falls from the bone, about 45 minutes to an hour. Remove chicken; reserve the broth. Skim excess fat from broth. When cool enough, skin, debone and break the chicken into small pieces by hand.

2. In a large frying pan, sauté the bacon briefly. Drain all but ½ cup of the excess fat from the skillet. Add olive oil to bacon. Cook for 1 minute. Add onion, green pepper, green onions (scallions) and oregano. Saute until the onions are translucent, stirring with a wooden spoon.
3. Add the garlic and sauté for two minutes, stirring with a wooden spoon.
4. Add tomato sauce, chicken and sherry. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add peas, pimientos, and lime juice during the last five minutes of cooking. Add salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
5. In a large, covered saucepan, mix the rice with the chicken broth, *Bijol*™ or paprika. Bring to a boil, cover and cook over low heat until the rice is thoroughly cooked and most of the broth absorbed, about 20 minutes.
6. Add the mayonnaise, a tablespoon at a time, and mix thoroughly. Set aside.
7. Preheat oven to 325 Deg F. (160 Deg C)
8. Spread one third of the rice mixture onto the bottom of a lightly buttered 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking pan. Layer chicken mixture on top of the rice. Then add another layer of rice mixture. Generously sprinkle with ¼ cup of Parmesan cheese on top of this layer. Add the remaining rice. Sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup of Parmesan cheese on the top layer, then spread the shredded Monterrey Jack cheese completely over top.
9. Bake uncovered for 15-20 minutes or until lightly brown and the cheese melts completely and bubbles.

Yield: Serves 8-10

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