

TITLE

**QUAIL, CARROT PURÉE, PICKLED AND ROASTED CARROTS,
KALE AND COBNUT PESTO, CHESTNUTS, QUAIL SAUCE**



I am currently studying at university in Durham, and the North East boasts an abundance of some of the best game meats anywhere, and a huge variety too. I wanted to create a dish to celebrate some of this produce, and for this particular starter dish I have chosen quail, though you could definitely serve larger portions to make it a main dish, and use other meats such as venison, partridge, pigeon or duck. While for everyday cooking boiling carrots in water is obviously fine, there is a tendency for the carrots to lose a fair bit of flavour during the boiling process, so I cooked them in carrot and orange juice (with just a bit of water), which really supercharges the carrot flavour and makes it sing. The roasted and pickled carrots show the carrot's versatility and add other dimensions to the dish. I have used baby rainbow heritage carrots, because the bright colours look fabulous on the plate, but you can use regular if you wish (though you may want to cut them differently). Cobnuts are a great autumn product and go wonderfully with the other elements, but if you can't find these then hazelnuts will work just as well. Since this is a starter I didn't want to include a rich sauce, which you might for a main, but I couldn't face wasting the quail bones and poaching liquor, so I combined both to create a quail bone sauce to drizzle on. NB If you are preparing the dish for a dinner party,



TITLE

all elements apart from the quail and sauce can easily be prepared in advance.

Ingredients (serves 4 as a starter)

For the carrot puree

- 40g butter
- 50g shallots, finely chopped
- 300g carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
- sprig of thyme
- 2 oranges, juice only (yields about 200ml of juice)
- 300ml carrot juice (just carrot juice, not as part of a fruit juice blend)
- 100ml water
- salt and pepper, to taste
- squeeze of lemon juice (only if needed, to balance the flavours)

For the pickled carrots

- 1 bunch (or 1 small sealed package from supermarket) baby rainbow heritage carrots
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 2 star anise
- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 100ml white wine vinegar (cider vinegar will also work)
- 50g caster sugar (white or golden)
- 50ml water
- sprig of tarragon

For the roasted heritage carrots

- 1 bunch (or 1 small sealed package from supermarket) baby rainbow heritage carrots, topped, scrubbed clean (leave skin on) and cut in half lengthways
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp honey (NB you want the carrots to glaze nicely without being too sweet)
- 1 tbsp cider vinegar (white wine vinegar or white balsamic will also work)
- salt and pepper, to taste

For the kale and cobnut pesto

- 4 packed cups of kale, washed thoroughly and any tough stalks removed
- zest of 2 lemons and juice of 1 lemon



TITLE

- 1 large (or 2 small) cloves of garlic
- 1 ½ tsp ground mixed spice
- ¼ cup of finely grated parmesan
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup peeled cobnuts (or hazelnuts)
- 1 ½ tbsp. white wine vinegar
- salt and pepper, to taste

For the quail

- 4 quails, thoroughly cleaned
- 2-3 thyme sprigs
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled and bruised
- 1 litre chicken stock (not stock cubes, or the end result will be too salty)
- 25g butter
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil, or light olive oil

For the quail sauce

- reserved carcasses and stock from the poached quails
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil, or light olive oil
- knob of butter
- balsamic vinegar, to taste
- salt and pepper, to taste

To garnish

- 4 large, raw chestnuts

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan.
2. For the carrot purée, melt the butter in a medium saucepan over a medium-low heat. Add the chopped shallots and sweat down until soft and translucent. Add the sliced carrot and cook for 5 minutes.
3. Increase the heat to medium, then add the orange juice and reduce by $\frac{3}{4}$ (leaving about 50ml reduced orange juice in the pan). Add the carrot juice and water, then cover and simmer until the carrots are soft. The liquid should reduce slightly, to intensify the flavour.
4. Remove from the heat and strain the mixture, reserving the warm liquid. Remove the tough tarragon stalk (the leaves should have fallen off, but if they haven't then pick them off and put back in carrot mixture), then blend the carrot mixture, while slowly pouring in the reserved cooking liquid until a smooth purée is



TITLE

achieved. Season to taste with salt and pepper (and lemon juice if needed), then pass through a fine sieve. Set aside in a small saucepan, to reheat for serving.

5. For the pickled carrots, using a mandolin or vegetable peeler, peel the carrots (skin on) into fine ribbons and set aside in a sealable container.
6. Put the coriander seeds, star anise and fennel seeds in a medium saucepan over a medium heat for about 2 minutes, or just until the spices are beginning to 'pop' and are releasing their aromas (take care not to burn). Add the vinegar, sugar, water and tarragon sprig, then bring to the boil and keep on the heat until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat.
7. Pour the warm pickling liquor over the carrot ribbons, put the lid on the container, then set aside until ready to serve.
8. For the roasted heritage carrots, place the halved baby carrots into a roasting tray large enough to fit them in a single layer. Combine the oil, honey and vinegar, then drizzle over the carrots, grind over salt and pepper, and toss to coat thoroughly.
9. Roast in the pre-heated oven for 20 minutes, or until tender, turning once or twice during cooking (taking care not to let the carrots shrivel and burn). Once cooked, set aside until ready for serving. (NB Leave the oven on, for roasting the quail carcasses.)
10. For the kale and cobnut pesto, place the cobnuts on a small roasting or baking tray, then place in the pre-heated oven for 5-7 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the oven.
11. Place the roasted cobnuts into a blender or food processor, along with all the other ingredients, then pulse until a coarse paste is formed. Set aside until ready to serve.
12. For the quails, place the chicken stock, thyme and garlic in a saucepan large enough to fit all 4 quails in snugly, then place over a medium heat and bring to a simmer. Add the quails and simmer for 2-3 minutes. Remove the quails with a slotted spoon and drain on sheets of kitchen paper, reserving the poaching stock.
13. When cool enough to handle, use a sharp knife to carefully cut the quail breasts away from the bone in one piece, then remove the legs. Set aside until ready for serving.
14. Break the quail carcasses down a bit, then put on a roasting tray and drizzle with the oil. Place in the preheated oven for around 15 minutes, until well browned and caramelised (taking care not to burn). Remove from the oven.
15. Remove the thyme and garlic from the reserved poaching stock, then place the stock in a medium saucepan and bring to the boil. Reduce, skimming off any impurities all the time, until you achieve a light syrupy consistency. Add a small amount of balsamic vinegar and salt and pepper, to taste. Whisk in the knob



TITLE

of butter until thoroughly incorporated and the sauce is glossy. Remove from the heat for service.

16. Prepare the chestnuts for garnish by peeling, then slicing as finely as possible using a mandolin.
17. Reduce the oven temperature to 160C, then put in the reserved roasted carrots for 5-10 minutes until warmed through.
18. Gently reheat the carrot purée and sauce on the stove while you finish cooking the quail.
19. To finish the quail, heat a frying pan until hot and add the oil and butter. Once the butter is foaming, season the quail breasts and legs then place, skin-side down, in the pan. Fry for 3-5 minutes, or until there is a little resistance when the thickest part of the quail breast is squeezed and the legs are crispy. Remove the meat from the pan, then leave to rest in a warm place for 5 minutes until ready to plate up.
20. To serve, spoon a circle of the warm carrot purée onto the centre of a serving plate as a base. Arrange the cooked and rested quail pieces on top (2 breasts and 2 legs per portion). Dot some kale and cobnut pesto around the edge of the purée, then neatly arrange the pickled and roasted carrots around the edge. Finally, scatter some shaved raw chestnut slices over the quail, then drizzle some quail sauce around the edge of the plate. Serve immediately.

