

TITLE: ITALIAN-STYLE SLOW-COOKED SQUID



Some people may be put off by the idea of slow-cooking because it's, well, slow. However, slow-cooking doesn't have to mean slow preparation and lots of fuss, and this squid dish is a great example of that. The actual preparation is quick, then since it cooks very slowly, you can always leave it cooking and go off and do something else. It's healthy and packed with lovely Italian flavours, and makes a great midweek meal or relaxed weekend dinner. Enjoy with polenta or cooked pasta of your choice, along with some bread to mop up the juices and a rocket salad.s

Ingredients

- 1-2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 ½ tbsp. plain flour
- 1kg cleaned squid and tentacles
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 ½ tsp fennel seeds
- 2 red onions, chopped
- 1 small fennel bulb, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 3 tbsp red wine vinegar
- large glass of red wine (about 200-250ml)
- 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 500ml fish or vegetable stock
- handful of fresh basil leaves, finely chopped
- 80-100g black olives (you can vary quantity to your liking), halved
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste



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- lemon juice, to taste
- To serve: sprigs of basil leaves, wet polenta or pasta of your choice, crusty bread, rocket salad

Method

1. Start by finishing the preparation of the squid. Pull out the innards, then separate them from the tentacles. Discard the innards and set the tentacles aside. Remove the small tough wings from the outside of the squid. For larger squid, slice the bodies into thick rings, and for smaller squid, either slice into rings or carefully make slits on one side, creating a 'concertina' effect. Dust all the pieces of prepared squid in the flour.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan and add the floured squid, then cook over a high heat for 2-3 minutes or until the squid is nicely coloured and golden. Remove from the pan. (NB It may seem tough at this stage, but don't worry because it will tenderize with the slow-cooking.)
3. Immediately deglaze the pan with the red wine vinegar and remove from the heat.
4. Heat the 2 tbsp olive oil in a shallow saucepan or flameproof casserole over a medium heat, then add the fennel seeds, chopped onion and chopped fennel. Cook for 5-10 minutes or until starting to soften, then add the garlic and cook for another 3-5 minutes, or until the vegetables are completely softened and sweated down.
5. Add the deglazing vinegar from the squid pan.
6. Add the wine to the pan and simmer until reduced by half, then add the chopped tomatoes and stock and bring to a simmer.
7. Add the seared squid to the pan, stir until everything is well mixed, then reduce heat to low and simmer gently for 1 hour, or until the sauce is thickened and rich, and the squid is really tender.
8. Stir in the chopped basil and olives, season to taste with salt, pepper and lemon juice, then remove from the heat.
9. Garnish with fresh basil sprigs, then serve with polenta or pasta, crusty bread to mop up the juices, and a rocket salad.

