

Herb roasted wood pigeon, cauliflower, bread sauce, hazelnut jus

Ingredients

Serves 4 as a starter;

2 x whole wood pigeons (oven ready)
1 x sprig rosemary & thyme
2 x garlic cloves (crushed)
50g butter

For the cauliflower puree;

2 x heads of cauliflower (cut into florets, keep some florets aside for garnish)
1 x onion (diced)
150g unsalted butter
250ml double cream

For the bread sauce;

1 large onion, peeled
6 cloves
1 bay leaf
6 black peppercorns
570ml/1 pint full-fat milk
110g/4oz fresh white breadcrumbs
40g/1½oz butter
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the jus;

1 x onion, diced
1 x garlic clove, crushed
Thyme & rosemary
100ml red wine
100ml port
500ml fresh beef stock
50g toasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped

To garnish

Roasted cauliflower florets, Watercress or wood sorrel

To make the jus, (this can be made up to 72hours in advance and stored in the fridge)

In a heavy bottomed sauce pan place the onion, garlic, thyme and rosemary over a medium-high heat. Cook until well coloured and caramelised, the more colour your able to get without burning the deeper and richer the finished sauce will be.

When you are happy with the colour of the onions add the port and red wine, this is the de-glazing process, it will lift all the flavours from the base of the pan, cook until the port and wine have reduced by 2/3.

At this stage add the beef stock, reduce again by 2/3 this should leave you with a very nice, dark sticky, rich sauce, once at this consistence you are ready to pass the sauce through a fine

sieve, place in a small pan and set aside until needed. When needed bring to the simmer and finish by adding the toasted hazelnuts.

For the cauliflower puree,

Place the roughly cut florets, butter, diced onion and a good pinch of salt into a sauce pan. Clingfilm the top or use the lid if it is tight fitting. Place the pan over a low heat, this method slowly extracts the natural juices and flavour from the cauliflower.

After 10-15mins over the low heat there will be some liquid in the pan, when this has happened remove the lid or Clingfilm, be very careful of the steam which will be released. Now add the double cream to the pan and continue to simmer until the cream has reduced by ½ to a thicker consistency. Remove the pan from the heat and allow to cool slightly before moving to a food blender to blitz to a puree, for an even smoother finish pass the puree through a fine sieve. Set aside until needed.

For the bread sauce,

Place the milk, onion, cloves, bay leaf and peppercorns in a heavy bottomed sauce pan. Place over a medium heat and slowly bring to the simmer to allow the milk to infuse with the aromatics. Once simmering leave for 5 mins then remove from the heat and leave to one side to infuse for 30 mins.

Once the milk is infused pass through a sieve to remove all aromatics, place back over a low heat, add the bread and stir until the bread takes on all of the milk and leaves you with a thick paste, at this stage add the butter and seasoning and stir well, leave to one side until needed.

To cook the pigeon,

Place a frying pan over a high heat, add a small splash of vegetable oil, when the oil is hot, carefully place the pigeons in the pan on their sides, leave them until golden brown then turn and repeat this until the whole bird is golden all over. Now add the herbs, garlic cloves and butter, once the butter has started to foam place the pan into an oven at 180°C for 4-6 mins. Remove from the oven and baste the birds with the foaming butter, then place on a draining towel and allow to rest for 6-10mins.

Once rested remove the breasts from the carcass the flesh should be pink and juicy. If you prefer your meat well-cooked just leave the pigeon in the oven for another 3-4mins.

To plate up,

Place a good spoonful of the cauliflower puree in the centre of a plate, carve the pigeon breast into two pieces and place on the puree, add a few small dots of the bread sauce, place a few of the roast cauliflower florets in the gaps, spoon the hazelnut jus over the dish, then finish with some picked watercress or wood sorrel.

ENJOY!!!

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