

Rabbit and crayfish stargazy pie

Ingredients

- back and front legs from 4 wild rabbits (reserve the saddles for another dish, such as a salad)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tbsp plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 2-3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- large knob unsalted butter
- 150ml/5¼fl oz English dry white wine or cider
- 2 litres/3½ pints hot chicken stock
- 500g/1lb 2oz good-quality puff pastry made with butter
- 1 lightly beaten free-range egg

For the crayfish

- 1 tsp fennel seeds
- 12 black peppercorns
- few sprigs of thyme
- 2 star anise
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tbsp salt
- 24 live freshwater crayfish
- 1 litre/1¾ pints chicken stock

To serve

- greens or mashed root vegetables such as celeriac or parsnip (optional)
- small boiled potatoes with chopped herbs (optional)

Preparation method

1. Season the rabbit legs with salt and freshly ground black pepper, and dust them with one tablespoon of the flour. Heat the oil in a heavy frying pan until hot, then lightly brown the rabbit over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes on each side. Carefully remove and drain on kitchen paper.
2. In a large lidded saucepan, gently fry the onions in the butter for 2-3 minutes until softened, but not coloured. Dust with the remaining flour and stir well over a low heat for a minute, then gradually add the wine and the hot stock, stirring to prevent lumps from forming. Bring to the boil.
3. Add the rabbit legs and season lightly with more salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cover with the lid. Simmer gently for about one hour or until the rabbit is tender. Remove the rabbit legs and leave to

30 mins to 1 hour

preparation time

1 to 2 hours

cooking time

Serves 4

By Mark Hix
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- cool. The sauce should be fairly thick - if it's not, continue simmering until it has reduced by half.
4. For the crayfish, bring a large saucepan of water to the boil with the fennel seeds, peppercorns, thyme, star anise, bay leaf, and salt. Simmer for five minutes. Plunge the crayfish into the liquid, bring the water quickly back to the boil and simmer for 1½ minutes. Drain and leave to cool.
 5. Pick out four similar-sized crayfish for the garnish and set aside. Peel the rest, including the large claws, first removing the head and then squeezing the shell between thumb and forefinger to crack it. Set the meat aside. Crush the shells a little, put them in a saucepan with the chicken stock and simmer for 30 minutes. Strain the stock through a sieve into a clean pan and boil to reduce to 4-5 tablespoons. Mix the reduced stock into the rabbit sauce.
 6. Once the rabbit legs are cool, remove the meat from the bones. Mix the rabbit meat into the sauce with the crayfish meat. Turn the mixture into a large pie dish or four individual dishes.
 7. Preheat the oven to 200C/400C/Gas 6.
 8. Roll out the pastry on a floured surface until about 3mm thick. Using a sharp knife, cut out a lid that is about 2cm/¾in larger all round than the top of the pie dish. (Or, if you are using individual dishes, cut the pastry into quarters, roll out and cut out four lids.) Brush the edge of the pastry lid with a little beaten egg, then lay it on top of the dish, egg-washed side against the rim. Trim the edge and press down to seal. Cut four small slits in the pastry lid (or a small slit in the centre of each of the individual ones) and insert the whole crayfish, keeping the top half of the body above the pastry lid. Brush the pastry with more beaten egg.
 9. Bake the pie for 30-35 minutes or until the pastry is golden-brown (small pies will take about 25 minutes); cover the crayfish with foil if they start to brown. Serve with greens or mashed root vegetables such as celeriac or parsnip and/or small boiled potatoes with chopped herbs.