

Another incredibly delicious recipe, six chicken thighs braised with tomatoes, mushrooms, thyme, etc. Supposedly devised for Napoleon after a battle, using local ingredients.

Recipe notes: Exactly one can of Marzano tomatoes was two cups. Six chicken thighs. Removed thighs after browning, added mushrooms and onions at same time. Added thighs back and brought to boil just before putting in oven. Oven at 325 deg for an hour using the round enameled pan (as in the photo).

Chicken Marengo

By Pierre Franey

Total Time 30 minutes

Rating ★★★★★ (2,049)



Jim Wilson/The New York Times

In the middle of June 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte's troops were engaged in battle with Austrian forces near the small village of Marengo in northern Italy. The battle was fierce, or so the legend has it, and Napoleon, of course, emerged victorious. And hungry. He asked his chef to prepare a meal quickly and the cook scoured the countryside looking for foods to prepare. He scurried around and discovered a chicken, olive oil, tomatoes, herbs, eggs and crawfish. Within minutes, a fire was started and the chef prepared a quick sauté of the chicken with tomatoes, oil and herbs. It is said that he garnished the dish before serving it with a fried egg and crawfish. In my version, the chicken, cut into serving pieces, is simply browned in a little olive oil (I add a touch of butter to give it flavor) on both sides. I then prefer to add sliced mushrooms (there are those who declare that truffles were among the original ingredients), seasonings, wine, tomatoes and parsley and cook covered until done, about 10 minutes longer.

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 4 servings

1 3-pound chicken cut into serving pieces

Salt to taste, if desired

Freshly ground pepper, to taste

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons olive oil

1½ cups thinly sliced mushrooms (about ½ pound)

½ cup finely chopped onion

½ teaspoon finely minced garlic

1 bay leaf

2 sprigs fresh thyme or ½ teaspoon dried

½ cup dry white wine

2 cups cored and cubed red ripe tomatoes, or use canned tomatoes

¼ cup tomato paste

½ cup chicken broth

2 sprigs fresh parsley

PREPARATION

Step 1

Sprinkle the chicken with salt and pepper to taste.

Step 2

Heat the butter and oil in a heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add the chicken pieces skin-side down. Cook until golden brown on one side, about five minutes. Turn the pieces and cook on the other side about two minutes. Pour off the fat from the skillet.

Step 3

Scatter the mushrooms over the chicken. Stir to distribute. Add the onion, garlic, bay leaf and thyme and cook about 5 minutes.

Step 4

Add the wine and scrape the bottom of the skillet with a wooden spoon to dissolve the brown particles that cling to the bottom of the pan. Add the tomatoes, tomato paste, chicken broth and parsley. Bring to the boil. Cover and cook 10 minutes. Serve with rice and a tossed green salad.