

Enjoy these layers of deliciousness

By Jerry Marlowe
Special to the Times-Reporter

Dear kind readers and devoted kitchen kooks. So what have all you creative cooks been up to lately? Have you tackled the impossible and then sat down totally exhausted and unable to even try your culinary creations. Hold on now, because I have a very edible recipe that my wife surprised me and my fellow food mavens with for my 80th year on earth. So it was time I share it with all you kind readers and please don't wait until you are 80 to try it. By the way, I am now 84 and counting and hoping you will truly and without any hesitation experience this all time favorite of ours.

CHICKEN PONTALBA ALA WILLI AND JERRY

It's a layer of vegetables and ham sautéed in butter, then covered with a layer of crisp lightly fried pieces of deboned chicken. The whole thing is then topped off with a sea of rich simmering bearnaise sauce. It is simple to prepare if you proceed one step at a time. So here is what to gather up

½ cup or a stick of butter
1 cup chopped onion
1 ½ cups thinly sliced shallots
1 tbs finely minced garlic
1 ¼ cups diced potatoes (½ inch dice)
1 cup ¾ inch diced lean ham
1 ½ cups sliced fresh mushrooms
½ cup dry white wine
a tbs finely minced cilantro
1 cup flour
1 tsp salt
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
⅓ tsp cayenne
2 lbs deboned chicken

breast, leg and thigh (That's about 2 whole small fryers)

1 cup vegetable oil
2 cups Bearnaise sauce.

OK here we go. You might need a small glass of your favorite wine or cider to get you through this challenging ordeal.

In a heavy 10 inch saute pan or skillet, melt the butter over low heat. Add the onion, shallots, garlic and potatoes and cook over low heat until the vegetables are browned (about 15 minutes) stirring frequently. Add the diced ham, mushrooms, wine and cilantro and cook for 8 minutes more. Then turn off the heat.

Remove the vegetables and ham from the pan with a slotted spoon and place in a large gratin dish attractive enough to bring to the table, allowing the excess butter to drain back into the pan. Now put the dish in a preheated 200 degree oven.

In a shallow bowl or pie dish, combine the flour, salt, black pepper and cayenne. Cut up the larger pieces of chicken so that none are thicker than about ½ inch or longer than 1 and a ½ inches. Now dredge the chicken pieces in the seasoned flour. Add the vegetable oil to the butter in the pan, then heat the oil and butter until it sizzles lightly. Fry the chicken pieces until they are cooked through and golden brown on all sides, about 8 to 10 minutes, turning frequently.

Remove the chicken and drain for a minute on paper towels. Then arrange the pieces evenly over the sautéed vegetables in the gratin dish. Put the dish back in the oven while you prepare the Bearnaise sauce. OK, we are almost home free

Remove the dish from the oven, spoon the sauce

evenly over the entire surface and serve it up proudly.

This should feed at least four hungry folks. As to the best wine to serve with your masterpiece, I served a good red Burgundy or red Bordeaux with it. You also must have some great California reds to go with it. Regardless if you are feeling romantic its time for candlelight and an intimate friend. That could also be your wife or husband to complete the evening.

Whoops, I almost forgot the Bearnaise sauce. I am sure you already have a recipe for that great French creation but if not here is my all time great friend Will Jones version.

Grab ½ lb butter, 6 egg yolks, 2 tbs tarragon leaves, 2 tsp chopped shallots, ¼ cup white wine, ¼ cup tarragon vinegar, mayonnaise. With an electric mixer beat the egg yolks slowly until quite stiff. While beating heat the butter and add to it the tarragon leaves, shallots and vinegar. Simmer about 10 minutes. Then remove from heat and stir the wine.

Pour the mixture into the egg yolks while still beating. When well mixed, add enough mayonnaise to double the volume of the sauce and mix it in. Wow everyone! Look up toward heaven and offer thanks to my all time greatest cooking mentor and author of his book called Wild In The Kitchen. He was kind enough to allow me to use his book title for all my classes and articles forever, Merci beaucoup forever good friend Will Jones.

Contact Jerry if you'd like to discuss a recipe or share one of your own. Drop him a note at: 131 Oakmont Drive in Dover, OH 44622.



MARLOWE