



Coq au Vin

(Casserole of Chicken in Red Wine, Garnished with Onions, Mushrooms, and Bacon | The Thirty-Eighth Show)

For 4 to 6 people

Coq au vin is probably the most famous of all French chicken dishes, and certainly one of the most delicious, with its rich red-wine sauce, its tender onion and mushroom garniture, and its browned pieces of chicken with their wonderful flavor. Ideal for a party because you may prepare it completely a day or more before serving, *coq au vin* seems to be even better when done ahead so all its elements have time to steep together.

The Bacon

- A 3- to 4-ounce chunk of lean bacon
- A 10-inch flameproof casserole or an electric skillet
- 2 Tb cooking oil

Remove rind and cut bacon into sticks 1 inch long and $\frac{1}{4}$ inch across. Simmer for 10 minutes in 2 quarts of water, drain, rinse in cold water, and dry. Sauté slowly in the casserole (260 degrees for the electric skillet) with the oil. When bacon is very lightly browned, remove to a side dish, leaving fat in pan.

Browning the Chicken

- 2½ to 3 lbs. cut-up frying chicken
- ½ tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- ¼ cup cognac

Dry chicken thoroughly in a towel. Brown on all sides in the hot fat (360 degrees). Season chicken with salt and pepper, return bacon to pan, cover pan, and cook slowly (300 degrees) for 10 minutes, turning chicken once. Then uncover, pour in cognac, ignite with a lighted match. Shake pan back and forth for several seconds until flames subside.

Simmering in Red Wine

- 3 cups Burgundy, Mâcon, Chianti, or California Mountain Red wine
- 1 to 2 cups beef stock or bouillon
- 1 Tb tomato paste
- 2 cloves mashed garlic
- ¼ tsp thyme
- 1 bay leaf

Pour wine into pan, and add just enough bouillon to cover the chicken. Stir in tomato paste, garlic, and herbs. Bring to the simmer, then cover and simmer slowly for about 30 minutes, or until chicken meat is tender when pierced with a fork.

The Onions

- 12 to 24 small white onions
- Salt to taste
- 1 to 2 Tb cooking oil

While chicken is cooking, drop onions into boiling water, bring water back to the boil, and let boil for 1 minute. Drain, shave off two ends of onions, peel carefully, and pierce a deep cross in the root end with a small knife (to keep onions whole during cooking). Heat oil in a frying pan, add onions, and toss for several minutes until lightly browned (this will be a patchy brown). Add water to halfway up onions and ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt, cover pan, and simmer slowly for 25 to 30 minutes, or until onions are tender when pierced with a knife.

The Mushrooms

- ½ lb. fresh mushrooms
- 1 Tb butter
- ½ Tb cooking oil

Trim base of mushroom stems, remove base from stems, wash stems and caps rapidly in cold water and dry in a towel. Cut caps into quarters, stems into bias chunks (to resemble, roughly, the cut caps). Heat butter and oil in frying pan; when bubbling hot, toss in mushrooms and sauté over high heat for 4 or 5 minutes until lightly browned.

Sauce and Serving

- 3 Tb flour
- 2 Tb softened butter

When chicken is done, drain out cooking liquid into a saucepan. Skim off fat and boil down liquid, if necessary, to concentrate flavor. You should have about 2¼ cups. Remove from heat. Blend butter and flour together in a saucer; beat into the cooking liquid with a wire whip. Bring to the simmer, stirring, and simmer for a minute or two until sauce has thickened. Scrape onions and mushrooms into sauce and simmer a minute to blend flavors. Carefully taste sauce, adding more salt and pepper if you feel it necessary. Then pour sauce over chicken. (Chicken is now ready for final reheating, but can be set aside until cool, then covered and refrigerated for a day or two.)

Shortly before serving, bring to the simmer, basting chicken with sauce. Cover and simmer slowly for 4 to 5 minutes, until chicken is hot through. (Do not overcook at this point!)

Serve from casserole, or arrange on a hot platter and decorate with sprigs of parsley.

Accompany with parsley potatoes, rice, or noodles; buttered green peas or a green salad; hot French bread; and the same red wine you used for cooking the chicken.

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