

Babette's Feast: Cailles en Sarcophage (Quails in Coffins)

Serves 4

Ingredients:

1 lb. puff pastry
4 quails, de-boned
4 slices of prosciutto OR 2 ½ oz foie gras, cut into 4 slices

For the Marinade:

½ cup Madeira
2 Tbsp. Cognac

For the Duxelles:

1 1/2 teaspoons salt
Freshly ground pepper to taste
1 ½ Tbsp. unsalted butter
1 Tbsp. olive oil OR duck fat
1 onion, chopped
2 cups mushrooms, chopped
1oz. black truffle, sliced (optional)
¼ cup chopped parsley
Pinch of nutmeg

For the Sauce:

½ cup white wine
1 cup Madeira
½ cup chicken stock
½ cup demi-glace
16 figs, quartered
1 sprig of marjoram (or ¼ teaspoon dried)

Directions:

Marinate the quail in ½ cup Madeira and Cognac for a few hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 425°. Cut 4 (8x6cm) rectangles from the pastry. Bake for 10 minutes or until puffed and golden. Remove the top and leave the 'nest'. Set aside to cool.

While the puff pastry cooks, heat oil and butter in a large frying pan. Add onion and cook until soft. Add mushrooms and cook until soft. Stir through parsley and nutmeg and season well. Remove and set aside to cool.

Raise the oven to 450 degrees.

Place 2 tablespoons of the mushroom mixture in the middle of each quail. Top with a few slices of truffle. If using, place a layer of foie gras on top, or wrap quail in prosciutto and tie with string. Season the outside of each bird with salt and pepper.

Heat extra oil in an oven-proof sauté pan. Add the quail and cook until browned on all sides. Place in the oven and roast for 10 minutes. Turn the quails and roast for 5-10 minutes more. Remove from pan and keep warm in a covered dish.

Return the pan that the quail was cooked in to the heat. Add madeira, stock, and demi-glace simmer, scraping the bottom of the pan to extract the pan juices. Whisk in the butter. Stir in the figs and marjoram and simmer for 1 minute. Continue to simmer, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes, until the sauce is reduced to 2/3 cup and has a thickened appearance. Season with salt and pepper to taste

To Serve:

Gently reheat the remaining duxelles and spoon into the bottom of each puff pastry "coffin". Untie each quail and place on top of each puff pastry. Spoon the sauce over the top, and drizzle with truffle oil, if using. Serve immediately.