

Whole roasted pheasant, savoy cabbage, bacon and chestnuts with fondant potato, redcurrant sauce and bread sauce

Now is the time to treat yourself to some great British game. Pheasant is right in season now and will be around until the middle of February. Unlike most game birds, pheasants are plump enough to make two portions out of one bird. It has a milder flavour than other game birds and has a closer flavour profile to a chicken or quail. Hens tend to be smaller and have a higher fat content than the cocks. As with most game birds some thoughtful cooking is important so they don't dry out. In this recipe we add some bacon to help keep the bird moist.

For the bird

- 1 pheasant (approx. 900g)
- 4 rashers of streaky bacon
- 2 shallots
- Sprig of thyme
- Sprig of rosemary
- 30g butter
- Pinch of salt and pepper

Trivet for the bird

- 1 large carrot
- 2 sticks celery
- 2 shallots
- 5 large cup mushrooms
- 2 bay leaf
- 2 crushed pieces of garlic

For the fondant

- 2 large red potatoes
- 300ml light chicken stock
- 1 bay
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 80g butter
- Salt and pepper



Bread sauce

- 10g butter
- 1 large shallot
- 1 star anise
- 3 cloves
- 2 bay leaf
- Pinch nutmeg
- 200ml full fat milk

For the cabbage

½ savoy cabbage finely shredded blanched, chilled under cold water and drained
1 large carrot finely diced
2 sticks celery finely diced
2 shallots all finely diced
Salt and pepper

Redcurrant sauce

80g cooked chestnuts
100ml red wine
800ml chicken stock (preferably fresh)
½ teaspoon of tomato puree
1 bunch sandys thyme
1 bunch sandys rosemary
1 tsp red currant jelly

Tip:

As pheasant comes in different sizes it's important not to overcook the bird. A 900g bird will take about 50 minutes at 180°C. If you don't have a temperature probe towards the end of the cooking time you can check the bird by opening up the gap between the breast and the thigh slightly to see if the juices run clear. Using a small thin knife or skewer is the best way to see if the juices are clear. If you touch the knife it should be hot. The bread sauce can be made early and cling-filmed to keep it warm. If the preparation of fondant potatoes is too lengthy, this dish would work equally well with roast potatoes.

Recipe:

For the bread sauce

- Sweat the spices and sliced shallots down with about 10g butter, add the milk and bring to the boil. Add a little salt and pepper and take off the heat allowing it to infuse while you take the crusts off the bread and blitz in a food processor.
- With the food processor running, pass the milk through a sieve and blitz till smooth.

For the bird

- Place a shallot, a cut in half sprig of rosemary and thyme and 30g butter into the cavity of the bird and season the inside.
- Lay two of the rashers of steaky bacon over the breasts and tie the bird using a length of butchers' string about 50cm. With the bird facing away from you, start at the neck of the bird placing the middle of the string around the front of the bird at shoulders and cross the string over the top of the bird, loop the two ends of the string around the legs pull it all tight. Bring the string down and around the parsons' nose and tie tight.
- Season the outside of the bird with salt and pepper.
- Roughly cut the vegetables and put them in a pile in the roasting tray for the bird to sit on.



For the potato

- Cut and peel the potato into nice barrel shapes and cut in half down the short side
- Place the potatoes flat edge down in a good a non-stick pan
- Add the stock, rosemary, thyme, bay, garlic and butter to the pan and cover with a round piece of greaseproof
- At this point you can put the bird in the oven, and put the potatoes on. Bring them to the boil, then reduce the heat to a low simmer both should take around 50mins
- As the potatoes cook the liquid will reduce leaving the butter colouring them. This process should take about the same time as the bird, if they are ready early you can leave the greaseproof on them take them off the heat until required as they can be reheated in the oven.

For the cabbage

- About 10mins before the end of cooking the bird and potatoes, sauté the chestnuts, bacon and vegetables with a knob of butter and once they're soft and the bacon is cooked, stir the blanched cabbage in.
- Cover the pan to keep it warm while you finish the bird.

To finish

- Take the bird out of the oven, remove the drum sticks, break them up and put them in the roasting tray with the trivet of vegetables.
- Put the tray on the heat, add the tomato purée and cook for about 30 seconds.
- Add the wine and reduce by half and then the stock and keep reducing until the sauce is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.
- Add the redcurrant jelly and when its dissolved pass the sauce through a fine sieve

Now you're ready to plate the dish. Start by removing the bacon then cut the thighs off. Cut down the backbone of the bird separating the meat away for the bone. I like to slice the breast into diagonal slices as per the picture below.



Wine pairing suggestions:

Château Macquin Saint-Georges Saint-Émilion 2018

Château de Santenay Mercurey Vieilles Vignes 2017