

Chicken Cacciatore a la Norman

2 1/2 pounds of boneless, skinless chicken breasts	1/4 cup minced parsley
2 ripe tomatoes	1 cup dry white wine or vermouth
1/2 pound cremini mushrooms	2 cups of boiling chicken stock
1 1/4 oz. dried porcini mushrooms	1/4 cup cognac or brandy
1 large onion chopped	4 tablespoons butter
2 cloves garlic, minced	2 to 4 tablespoons of olive oil
1/4 cup of chopped basil	2 1/2 tablespoons flour
1 tablespoon of fresh thyme	Salt and pepper to taste
1 tablespoon of fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon, dried	

Soak the porcini mushrooms in 2 cups of hot water for at least 30 minutes. Remove the porcini, dry on paper towels and chop, reserving the soaking water. Place a wet paper towel in a sieve and pour the porcini soaking water through it. This will eliminate any sand or residue from the mushrooms.

Slice or quarter the fresh mushrooms and sauté over high heat until lightly browned in 2 tablespoons each of butter and olive oil in a large Dutch oven. Remove with a slotted spoon to a side dish. Sauté the chopped porcini for a minute or so and remove to the dish with the fresh mushrooms.

Cut the chicken breasts into 1-inch cubes, and dry each piece thoroughly with paper towels. Add 2 more tablespoons of butter to the Dutch oven and place over medium-high heat. Add chicken pieces and brown lightly just until cooked through. Do not overcook or the chicken will be tough. Test a piece by cutting through, making sure it has just lost its pinkness in the middle. Cook the chicken in batches. Do not crowd, or they will not brown properly. Remove to a side dish, and season with salt and pepper.

Drop the tomatoes into boiling water for 10 seconds. Core, skin, cut in half, and gently squeeze out the juice and seeds. Chop and set aside. Chop the onion and mince the garlic. Sauté the onion over medium heat until golden in the same Dutch oven, adding more oil if necessary. Add the garlic and cook only for 2 minutes. Add the wine, raise the heat and boil until it has evaporated. Sprinkle on the flour, stirring constantly for 1 minute. Add the boiling chicken stock, and cook until thickened.

Heat the brandy or cognac in a ladle, ignite, and pour over the onion mixture, shaking the pan until the flame is extinguished. Add the tomatoes and the herbs and simmer for 10 minutes, correcting the seasoning. Add as much of the porcini soaking liquid as you like to reach a desired consistency, and simmer for 2 more minutes.

Return the chicken and mushrooms to the Dutch oven along with any exuded liquid. Simmer for about 3 minutes, just until heated. Do not overcook. Correct the seasoning and serve over fresh linguine noodles or any dried pasta. Decorate with some of the fresh herbs on the top.