

Chicken Braised With Meyer Lemon & Fennel

A lidded cazuela, cocote or other terra-cotta casserole is ideal for this dish. I use one that I brought home from Provence. The flavors blend together during the slow cooking, as the fennel and chicken absorb the flavor of the lemon. To create other versions of this dish, use chicken with carrots and onions instead of fennel, or change it entirely, using pork loin, onions and shelled and peeled fava beans.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 large or 2 medium fennel bulbs
- 3 Meyer lemons
- 1 teaspoon coarse sea salt or kosher salt
- 6 chicken thighs, with or without skin
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 garlic cloves, minced *4*
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup green olives (optional)
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ cup water
- 2 tablespoons grated Meyer lemon zest

INSTRUCTIONS: Trim the stalks from the fennel, reserving the lacy greens. Slice the fennel bulb lengthwise into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices. Slice these lengthwise into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick slices. Set aside.

Cut the lemons in half, then cut each half into 3 pieces. Discard the seeds. You should have about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of lemon cubes. Put the lemons in a bowl and sprinkle them with the salt. Add the chicken, pepper, oregano and garlic and turn to coat.

Set aside for about 30 minutes.

Heat half of the olive oil in a clay casserole over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add the chicken, and lightly brown, turning several times. This should take about 10 minutes. Remove the chicken and set aside.

Add the remaining olive oil and the fennel to the casserole. Cook, stirring, until the fennel is nearly translucent, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the lemons and optional olives, turning them a few times, then add the wine and water. Scrape up any bits clinging to the pan, then return the chicken to the pan. Cover, reduce the heat to low, and cook until the chicken is tender and the fennel can be cut with a spoon, about 45 minutes.

While the chicken is cooking, mince enough of the fennel fronds to make 2 tablespoons. Combine this with the lemon zest and set aside.

To serve, transfer the contents of the casserole to a serving bowl or platter and sprinkle with the fennel and lemon zest.

Serves 4

PER SERVING: 265 calories, 23 g protein, 19 g carbohydrate, 12 g fat (2 g saturated), 86 mg cholesterol, 730 mg sodium, 8 g fiber