

CHICKEN IN RIESLING

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

Though coq au vin made with red wine is perhaps the best-known incarnation of the French dish in this country, most regions of France have unique versions that take advantage of local wines. Alsace's dry Riesling lends a gentle richness to this creamy, comforting meal.

- 1 whole chicken (about 3½ lb), backbone discarded and chicken cut French style into 8 pieces (see cooks' note, below)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 4 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only), finely chopped (2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
- 4 medium carrots, halved diagonally
- 1 cup dry white wine (preferably Alsatian Riesling)
- 1½ lb small (2-inch) red potatoes
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- ½ cup crème fraîche or heavy cream
- Fresh lemon juice to taste

► Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

► Pat chicken dry and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt and a rounded ¾ teaspoon pepper. Heat oil with 1 tablespoon butter in a wide 3½- to 5-quart heavy ovenproof pot over medium-high heat until foam subsides, then brown chicken in 2 batches, turning once, about 10 minutes total per batch. Transfer to a plate.

► Meanwhile, wash leeks (see Tips, page 143) and pat dry.

► Pour off fat from pot, then cook leeks, shallot, and ¼ teaspoon salt in remaining 2 tablespoons butter, covered, over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until leeks are pale golden, 5 to 7 minutes. Add chicken, skin sides up, with any juices from plate, carrots, and wine and boil until liquid is reduced by half, 3 to 4 minutes. Cover pot and braise chicken in oven until cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes.

► While chicken braises, peel potatoes, then generously cover with cold water in a 2- to 3-quart saucepan and add 1½ teaspoons salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer until potatoes are just tender, about 15 minutes. Drain in a colander, then return to saucepan. Add parsley and shake to coat.

► Stir crème fraîche into chicken mixture and season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice, then add potatoes.

COOKS' NOTE: A chicken cut French style yields 2 breast halves with wings attached, halved crosswise for a total of 4 breast pieces, 2 drumsticks, and 2 thighs. If you don't want to cut up a whole chicken, you can use 3 pounds chicken parts.