

Enamel-coated steel
Kobenstyle Buffet,
Dansk, \$172; williams-
sonoma.com.

BRAISED CHICKEN LEGS *with* SPINACH & FENNEL SALAD

With this one-pot wonder of a recipe, chicken cooked low and slow in a stove top-safe casserole pot with rich porcini mushrooms and winter vegetables is topped right before serving with a bright, snappy salad. "It's the sort of warming, soulful food that I love to prepare for my family," says Smillie. "The minerality of the spinach plays so well against the soft, subtle flavors of the braised meat." You'll need to rub the chicken with spices and refrigerate it overnight before cooking, but that's the magic move that ultimately makes this dish sing.

SERVES 6

ACTIVE TIME 1 hour, 50 minutes
TOTAL TIME 3 hours, 10 minutes,
plus overnight marinating

BRAISED CHICKEN

- 6 whole chicken legs
- 1 tbsp whole black peppercorns
- 1 tbsp fennel seeds
- 1 tbsp coriander seeds
- Kosher salt
- 2 tbsp oregano leaves, coarsely chopped
- Finely grated zest of 1 medium lemon
- Finely grated zest of 1 medium orange
- 1 cup (1 oz. package) dried porcini mushrooms

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 4 oz. pancetta, diced into ¼-inch pieces
- 2 medium red onions, diced into ¼-inch pieces
- ½ medium fennel bulb, cored and diced into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 celery stalk, diced into ¼-inch pieces
- 1 large carrot, peeled and diced into ¼-inch pieces
- Black pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- ½ cup red wine vinegar
- ½ cup agave
- ½ cup white wine
- 3½ cups chicken broth
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter

THE SAVORY SETUP

BRANCH OUT Skip traditional florals for the buffet or dining table and mix and match clusters of winter leaves and berries instead. Burnished and moody, the palette is perfectly in step with the season.

GO FROM HEARTH TO TABLE Don't be shy about serving the braised chicken directly from a pretty enameled pot (check out Dansk, Le Creuset, and Staub for stylish options). The presentation offers an inviting, informal tone.

TRY TILES Place the warm pot on a gorgeous graphic ceramic tile in lieu of a more expected trivet. We chose Moroccan geometric-patterned designs for some globe-trotting texture.

- 2 tsp fresh orange juice
- 1 tbsp sliced fresh mint

SPINACH & FENNEL SALAD

- 10 oz. baby spinach
- 1 medium fennel bulb, halved, cored, and thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp chardonnay vinegar
- 3 tbsp olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 5 oz. fresh goat cheese

Make the braised chicken:

- 1 Pat the chicken legs dry with paper towels; arrange in a glass 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
- 2 In a spice grinder, combine peppercorns, fennel seeds, and coriander seeds; pulse until coarsely ground.
- 3 In a small bowl, mix ground spices with ¼ cup salt, fresh oregano, and lemon and orange zests.
- 4 Season chicken with the rub. Cover with plastic wrap; refrigerate overnight.
- 5 The next day, allow chicken to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes before cooking.
- 6 In a medium bowl, cover the dried porcini mushrooms with hot water; soak until softened, about 20 minutes. Remove mushrooms and finely chop. Discard or save soaking liquid for another use.
- 7 Preheat oven to 300°F.
- 8 In a large stove top-safe casserole pot, heat the olive oil over moderate heat until shimmering. Sear chicken in batches until golden brown, about 5 minutes per side. Transfer to a plate. Pour off the accumulated fat in the casserole pot.
- 9 Add the chopped mushrooms, pancetta, red onions, fennel pieces, celery, and carrot to the casserole pot; season with salt and pepper. Cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until most of the pancetta fat has been rendered and the vegetables are tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Add minced garlic, tomato paste, and dried oregano. Cook, stirring, until tomato paste becomes a deep brick red, about 3 minutes.
- 10 Deglaze the pan with red wine vinegar, agave, and white wine; cook over moderately high heat, scraping up the brown bits from the bottom of the casserole pot with a wooden spoon. Continue cooking until the liquid has reduced by two-thirds, about 10 minutes.
- 11 Return chicken to the casserole pot along with juices and chicken broth. Carefully cover the surface of the braise with a piece of crumpled parchment paper cut to the diameter of the pot, and then put on the casserole-pot lid. Bring to a boil and then transfer to the oven to braise for 90 minutes, until chicken is tender and easily pierced with a knife.
- 12 Take off parchment paper; transfer chicken legs to a platter with a slotted spoon. Cover with foil.
- 13 With the lid off, cook braising liquid over moderately high heat until reduced by a third, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in butter, orange juice, and mint. Season with salt and pepper.
- 14 Spoon braising liquid over the chicken legs.

Make the salad: In a large bowl, toss the baby spinach and fennel with vinegar, olive oil, and lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper. Crumble goat cheese over the salad and toss again. Serve immediately on top of the braised chicken, and drizzle with olive oil.

WINE *etc.*

THE MENU

BRAISED CHICKEN
LEGS WITH SPINACH &
FENNEL SALAD

INDIVIDUAL
APPLE CROSTATAS

GLÜHWEIN
SANGRIA

Cook up a cozy winter meal for friends—complete with chalet-chic décor touches—crafted by Justin Smillie, the chef at N.Y.C.'s refined-rustic eatery Upland. The main event? A delectable one-pot dish that's designed for sharing. Since there's minimal cleanup, you all get to relish more time fireside

PARTY HEARTY!

photographed by GENTL & MYERS