

Chicken Marengo

Author: Chef Eric



A delicious chicken stew, thanks to Chef Dunand and Napoleon!

Ingredients

- 1 chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 teaspoon pepper
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup chopped tomato
- 1/2 cup sliced white truffles, optional
- 1/4 cup cognac
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 8 quail eggs, for garnishing
- 8 Crayfish or prawns for garnishing, optional

Preparation Time	20 min	Difficulty	Simple
Portions	8 servings	Yield	
Country/Region			
Vegetarian	No		

Preparation

Cut the chicken into 8 pieces. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and flour and brown in olive oil. Set aside. Sauté onions and garlic in the same pan and discard excess fat and add chicken and flame with cognac carefully. Add white wine and the rest of the ingredients, cover and simmer until tender (30-40 minutes). Fry the eggs and place one on each dish as a garnish.

Notes

Fresh tomatoes can, of course, be used, but unless you can get large, juicy, sweet ones, I prefer to replace them with tinned tomatoes and just add a roughly chopped fresh tomato at the end. As crayfish is not always available you may substitute with prawns. **The battle of Marengo, a dish is born**

It was at Marengo, situated south of Turin, in the Italian province of Piedmont, that Napoleon defeated the Austrians in June 1800, in a battle which he regarded as the most brilliant of his career. Napoleon led his army in a march across the Alps, through the Saint Bernard Pass, into the Po Valley. His army clashed with the Austrians at Marengo on June

14, 1800. Napoleon's troops would have been defeated had reinforcements not arrived. Napoleon pursued his enemy with such vigor that he left the commissary, but not his cook, Dunand, far behind.

Napoleon, as was his habit, had not eaten before the battle and was certain to be famished. When he called for a meal, he demanded immediate service. Dunand was desperate. Foragers were sent out and turned up only meager booty of a scrawny chicken, four tomatoes, three eggs, a few crayfish, a little garlic and a frying pan, for Dunand was without his cooking utensils. They were unable to find butter, but had managed to get some olive oil.

Dunand cut up the chicken with a saber and fried it in oil, crushed garlic and water made it more palatable with a little cognac filched from Napoleon's own canteen, together with some emergency-ration bread supplied by one of the soldiers, along with eggs, fried in the same liquid on the side, and the crayfish, also fried, on top. A measure of Dunand's desperation was the unholy combination of chicken and crayfish. He must really have felt that all the food he could scrape together was inadequate. Napoleon found the dish excellent and ordered it to be served after every battle.

On the next occasion, Dunand tried to improve the dish by substituting white wine for water, adding mushrooms, and leaving out the crayfish. Napoleon noted the disappearance and demanded that they be restored to the dish, but not for gastronomic reasons. Napoleon was highly superstitious and chicken with crayfish was associated in his mind with victory.

Nowadays, most French cooks leave out the crayfish, but in Piedmont, restaurants abide by the tradition of including crayfish for historical reasons. Sometimes they add what Dunand's foragers might have found in the area, but did not, and that is white truffles.

Chicken Marengo today is chicken cut into pieces, browned in oil and then cooked slowly with peeled tomatoes, crushed garlic, parsley, white wine and cognac, seasoned with crushed pepper and served with fried eggs on the side and sometimes croutons, doubling as Dunand's army bread.