

SQUIRREL AND GIROLLE MUSHROOM PASTY (MAKES 6)

SHORTCRUST PASTRY (OR BUY SOME)

250g plain flour
125g Cold Butter
125g Beef Suet
Salt

METHOD

Put the flour and salt in a large bowl and add the cubes of butter and shredded suet.

Use your fingertips to rub the butter and suet into the flour until you have a mixture that resembles coarse breadcrumbs.

Using a table knife, stir in just enough of the cold water to bind the dough together. Start with 1-2 tablespoons and add more if absolutely needed (shorter pastry will have a better texture, though can be a bit crumbly to work with). Gently knead the pastry on a clean work surface until it just comes together.

Cover in cling film and chill for 30 minutes whilst making the filling

COOKING THE SQUIRRELS

Ingredients

3 or 4 Squirrels depending how hungry you are
100ml Madeira, 50ml Marsala & 50ml Cognac
1 Large Carrot
4 Garlic Cloves
2 Sticks Celery
1 Banana Shallot
Few Sprigs of thyme
2 Bay Leaves. Small Sprig of Thyme & Parsley
8 Black Peppercorns
1l or enough Light Chicken, Rabbit or Veal Stock to cover the jointed squirrel

Marinate Squirrels in Marsala, Madeira & Cognac for 2-4hrs

METHOD 1 SOUS VIDE

Strain Squirrels, reserve marinade. Dice vegetables and sauté until soft, leave to cool and add the remaining aromatics. Add the stock and seal in a vac bag. Poach at 75c in a water bath for 16hrs. After 16hrs, pick squirrel meat of the carcass. Reserve the vegetables but remove the aromatics.

METHOD 2 CASSEROLE

Strain Squirrels, reserve marinade. Dice vegetables and add with the herbs into a solid casserole top, gently sauté until soft and add your choice of stock. Now add the squirrels ensuring they are covered in the liquid and put on the lid. If you need to it can always be topped up with water to cover. Place in an oven on gas mark $\frac{1}{4}$ or 100c in an electric oven for about 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours checking that squirrels remain covered in liquid for the duration of cooking. Once tender and the meat gently falling off the bone, lift the squirrels out of the pot and pick the meat. Strain of the liquor and discard the herbs and aromatics but reserve the vegetables and stock.

THE FILLING

The Picked Cooked meat of 3 or 4 large Grey Squirrels about 400g
The reserved marinade
50g Flour
25g Flour
350g Squirrel Stock if using the casserole method, or Chicken if using sous vide)
100g Girolles if available or sliced chestnut mushrooms if not

METHOD

Put the butter into a medium hot pan and gently sauté of the mushrooms. Add the marinade after a couple of minutes and cook off until it has all but disappeared. Now add the flour and absorb all of the moisture in the pan, moving it all the time until everything is coated in flour. Now add the stock bit by bit until you have a very thick mushroom paste. Set aside to cool.

Now gently fold in the picked squirrel meat and reserved vegetables so they are evenly incorporated. Check the seasoning and add any salt or pepper as required.

BUILDING THE PASTIES.

Egg wash of one egg and a splash of milk and pinch of salt whisked together.

Now to build the pasties. Roll out the dough ball into a sausage and cut into 6 even discs. Roll each of these into a ball on a floured surface. Now roll them flat into a circular shape about 3mm thick.

Brush the edge of the circular pastry with egg wash and place one tablespoon of the chilled filling into the centre of the disc. Fold the pastry over so you have a semicircle.

Now whilst crimping the edges force any air out of the pasty and seal shut.

Repeat and place on a non-stick baking sheet and egg wash the pasties before placing in a preheated oven (180c or gas mark 4) for 20 – 25 mins until golden brown.