

Is your freezer still full of birds?

By popular request, the creator of the cold lambs-neck-with-three-bean-salad recipe, well-known amongst certain wingshooters and some farmers in the Springbok Flats, Dagmar van der Westhuizen reveals some of her special recipes:

Give me a kudu, eland, springbok, or any proper game carcass for that matter and I enjoy making the nicest biltong, roasts, etc., but a... bird? 'Maar wat die man van die veld af huis toe bring, moet verwerk word!' So I experimented with our feathered friends. There are two essentials: The meat must be tender and the gravy rich!

Daggie's kumquat bird breasts

Firstly, I do not touch birds that still have their feathers on. The birds must be cleaned properly and skinned before I work with them!

Before you start cooking, try to find all the points-of-entry of the shot pellet(s) in the flesh and remove the pellets. You will see that a feather comes with every pellet you take out... and who likes to eat wet feathers?

Take your biggest pot and put in all the birds that will fit into it. Add: Chopped onions, cloves, crushed juniper berries, garlic flakes, lots of mixed herbs, ground black pepper and salt. If you don't know how much, keep tasting and add accordingly. Cover the birds with half-water-half-beer (or red wine), bring to the boil, then simmer until the birds are tender. Take out the birds and pour the stock through a fine mesh sieve. Depending on the amount of liquid you have left, add one or two chicken stock cubes, and season to taste.

Now take only the tender bird breasts (leave the rest for later) and put them in a flat casserole, and start making the gravy. This is the most important part of the recipe:

Fry one finely chopped onion in butter. In the meantime, mix two tablespoons of Dijon mustard with one tablespoon of honey, one tablespoon of thick soya sauce, salt and black pepper. Add one cup of the bird stock to the frying onions, add the honey-mustard mix and 250 ml Ultramel cream (does not curdle when cooked). Now you add kumquat preserve or, if you haven't any, orange preserve. Taste and adjust to your liking; if it's too sweet, add a few drops of lemon juice. Thicken the gravy with a little Maizena and pour over the meat.

With the remaining stock you can make a great soup with your favourite vegetables.

Cold Curried Bird Breasts

This cold dish is ideal for the coming summer! Finely chop one small onion and fry (covered) gently in one tablespoon olive oil for five minutes or until soft. Stir in one level tablespoon medium curry powder, cook for a few minutes to bring out the flavour. Stir in 1/4 pint beef stock, one tablespoon tomato paste, two heaped tablespoons of sweet chutney, the juice of half a lemon. Bring to the boil whilst stirring, remove from heat and let cool.

Mix half a pint of good mayonnaise (only Hellmans or French mayo from Woolies) with 3 tablespoons of cream, add the cold curry sauce and stir well. Remove all pieces of sinew and cartilage from the (by now cold) bird breasts, cut the breasts into bite-size pieces, arrange in a serving dish and spoon over the curry mayonnaise!

'Guten Appetit.'

Now you are still left with the breastless carcasses. Pour yourself a glass of wine, put on your favourite music, sit down and start to de-bone the bird chassis, wings and legs very carefully — there are many very fine bones, cartilage and sinews and you don't want to kill your husband with a sharp bird bone!

If you would like to know what I do with this meat, give me a call!

