

August Recipe

Spanish Chicken Pie

Packed with magnificent flavours and juicy textures, this is a fine pie to eat at a table or under a tree.

SERVES 6

**FOR THE FILLING:**

8 chicken thighs
Salt and freshly ground pepper
1 tbsp olive oil
A knob of butter
2 small red onions, chopped
2 sticks celery, chopped
Red peppers, cored, deseeded and sliced
1 fennel bulb, sliced
8 cloves garlic, chopped
½ tsp saffron
2 tsp paprika
1 large glass red wine (about 300ml/ 10floz)
400g (14oz) tin plum tomatoes

FOR THE PASTRY:

100g (3½ oz) prepared suet, such as Atora
200g (7oz) self-raising flour
4 tbsp white wine
A large pinch of salt
1 egg, beaten

Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a large pot and fry the chicken pieces until they are slightly brown. Remove from the pot and set aside for the moment. Add the butter to the pot and stir in the onions, celery, peppers and fennel. Leave them to stew gently for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally and checking that they do not burn or stick to the pan. Mix in the garlic, saffron and paprika. After 2 minutes, pour in the wine and tomatoes. Season with a pinch of salt and a few grinds of black pepper.

Return the chicken to the pot and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring from time to time to make sure it does not stick. Allow the mixture to cool and then take the chicken pieces out of the sauce.

Preheat the oven to 220°C (425°F/Gas 7). Pull the chicken meat from the bones with your fingers, discarding the skin and bones. Cut the meat into bite-sized pieces and stir it back into the sauce. Season the mixture to taste and then pour it into a pie dish. Set the dish aside.

Make the pastry by mixing the suet, flour, white wine and salt together in a large bowl until you have a soft dough. Add a little more flour if the dough is sticky, or wine if it is too dry. Knead the dough for a couple of minutes until it becomes smooth and a little elastic.

Roll out the pastry so that it will be big enough to cover the pie dish. Brush the rim of the dish with a little beaten egg and place the pastry over the pie. Trim the edges, putting aside any trimmings and brush the top of the pastry with more egg. Press the edges down using the tines of a fork. Cut pastry shapes from the extra pastry and decorate the top of the pie. Cut a hole in the top to let steam escape and brush all over with more of the egg. Bake for 30 minutes. Check after 15 minutes. If the pastry is turning golden, cover with foil.

I like to serve this pie with rice and buttered spinach or a potato salad with cold French beans tossed in vinaigrette.