

Roasted grouse, lentils and girolles

Grouse “the king of game” is one of the most revered and renowned game birds.

With their mild gamey flavor, the grouse season starts from the 12th of August

(known in hunting circles as ‘the glorious twelfth”) and they’re available until the 10th December. Living on moorland in Scotland, Northern England and Wales they are one of the most prized game birds, not just for their flavour but for the fact they can fly at 81mph thus making them very difficult to shoot!

2 grouse
2 slices of streaky bacon
30g butter
Salt and pepper

For the lentils

250g Sandys speckled lentils
1 medium carrot
2 large shallots
1 celery stick
1 clove of garlic
2 tubs of Sandys game stock
1 tbsp tomato puree
25g butter
1 tbsp Demerara sugar
3 bay leaf
1 star anise
1 ½ tbsp red wine vinegar or sherry vinegar

For the mushrooms

140g girolle mushrooms
1 small clove of garlic
¼ lemon zest
Pinch of fresh parsley

Chef’s tip:

It’s always important to let your meat rest, but with this small game bird it’s even more important.

Because they’re wild, and thus very lean it’s hard to keep the meat moist. The fat from the bacon and butter will help, but if you cut it too early you can lose a lot of the moisture.

Due to the salt and acidity of the sauce, try pre-cooking your lentils al dente (a little undercooked) and finish cooking them in the sauce. Even though you’re only using ¼ of a lemon, it doesn’t mean you have to waste it, you can always slice the rest put them laid out on a sheet of grease proof paper and freeze them, when they’re frozen you can put them into a container and use them for your gin and tonics.

Recipe:

For the lentils

- Cook the lentils as described on the packet. Then cool them in cold water until the sauce is finished. There is no need to soak them

- Finely dice the carrot, shallot, celery, garlic with a small pinch of salt
- Put 25g of butter into a heavy bottomed saucepan and put on a medium heat
- When the butter starts to foam, add the diced vegetables, bay leaf, star anis until they are soft and with a little color
- Add the tomato puree and cook gently for 2 minutes
- Add the sugar, and red wine or sherry vinegar reduce until it looks like a wet paste
- Then pour in the game stock bring to the boil, when it's come to the boil reduce the heat to a simmer and reduce by just over half or until it starts to become sticky and coats a metal spoon
- Now you can combine your lentils and sauce and leave it on a very gentle heat to finish the lentils off or just leave them to on side until needed, must check the seasoning

For the grouse

- Preheat the oven to 200°C
- Cut the bacon in half and tie onto the breasts
- Season the birds including the cavity with salt and pepper
- Halve then butter and also pop it into the cavity
- If you can, balance the grouse bottom up resting the bird on the side of the pan so the butter stays inside
- Roast for about 8-10mins depending on the size, remove from the pan and rest for another 8 mins, but do keep the bird in the pan

For the mushrooms

While the bird is resting pop the lentils back on to heat up

- In the pan you cooked the grouse in add a little knob of butter and put on the heat until it starts foaming
- When it starts to foam, add the garlic and the mushrooms with a pinch of salt and pepper sauté until tender
- Finish with the lemon zest and parsley