

Chicken Marbella

This was the first main-course dish to be offered at The Silver Palate shop, and the distinctive colors and flavors of the prunes, olives, and capers have kept it a favorite for years. It's good hot or at room temperature. When prepared with small drumsticks and wings, it makes a delicious appetizer.

The overnight marination is essential to the moistness of the finished product: The chicken keeps and even improves over several days of refrigeration; it travels well and makes excellent picnic fare.

½ cup olive oil
½ cup red wine vinegar
1 cup pitted prunes
½ cup pitted Spanish green olives
½ cup capers with a bit of juice
6 bay leaves
1 head of garlic, peeled and finely puréed
¼ cup dried oregano
Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper,
to taste
4 chickens (2½ pounds each), quartered
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup dry white wine
¼ cup fresh Italian (flat-leaf) parsley or fresh cilantro,
finely chopped

1. Combine the olive oil, vinegar, prunes, olives, capers and juice, bay leaves, garlic, oregano, and salt and pepper in a large bowl. Add the chicken and stir to coat. Cover the bowl and refrigerate overnight.

2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.

3. Arrange the chicken in a single layer in one or two large, shallow baking pans and spoon the marinade over it evenly. Sprinkle the chicken pieces with the brown sugar and pour the white wine around them.

4. Bake, basting frequently with the pan juices, until the thigh pieces yield clear yellow (rather than pink) juice when pricked with a fork, 50 minutes to 1 hour.

5. With a slotted spoon, transfer the chicken, prunes, olives, and capers to a serving platter. Moisten with a few spoonfuls of the pan juices and sprinkle generously with the parsley or cilantro. Pass the remaining pan juices in a sauceboat.

16 pieces, 10 or more portions

Note: To serve Chicken Marbella cold, cool to room temperature in the cooking juices before transferring the pieces to a serving platter. If the chicken has been covered and refrigerated, reheat it in the juices, then allow it to come to room temperature before serving. Spoon some of the reserved juice over the chicken.

French Potato Salad with Bacon

8 or 9 new potatoes (1 pound)

Salt, to taste

1/4 pound bacon

1/4 cup finely chopped shallots

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

2 tablespoons olive oil

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1/4 cup chopped red onion

1/2 cup chopped fresh Italian (flat-leaf) parsley

1. Scrub the potatoes under running water with a soft brush. Quarter them and drop them into a large heavy pot of cold, salted water. Bring to a boil and cook until tender but still firm, 8 to 10 minutes after the water reaches a boil.
 2. Meanwhile, chop the bacon and sauté in a small skillet over medium-low heat until crisp. Remove the bacon and reserve.
 3. In the bacon fat remaining in the skillet, sauté the chopped shallots until tender but not at all browned, 5 minutes or so. Reserve the shallots and fat.
 4. When the potatoes are done, drain them and drop them into a mixing bowl.
 5. Pour the vinegar, olive oil, shallots, and reserved bacon fat over the still-hot potatoes. Season with salt and pepper and gently toss. Add the red onion and parsley and toss again. Cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate.
 6. Before serving, bring back to room temperature, toss, correct the seasoning, and add additional oil and vinegar if the salad seems dry. Sprinkle the reserved crisp bacon on top.
- 4 portions

Carrot Cake

In the beginning, Sheila's mother drove her famous carrot cakes down to Manhattan daily from her Connecticut kitchen. The cake became a Silver Palate classic; it may now become yours as well.

Butter, for greasing the pan
3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
3 cups sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon baking soda
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1½ cups corn oil
4 large eggs, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1½ cups shelled walnuts, chopped
1½ cups shredded coconut
1⅓ cups puréed cooked carrots
¾ cup drained crushed pineapple
Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe follows)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease two 9-inch springform pans.
2. Sift the dry ingredients into a bowl. Add the oil, eggs, and vanilla. Beat well. Fold in the walnuts, coconut, carrots, and pineapple.
3. Pour the batter into the prepared pans. Set on the center rack of the oven and bake until the edges have pulled away from the sides and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 50 minutes.
4. Cool on a cake rack for 3 hours. Fill and frost the cake with the cream cheese frosting.

10 to 12 portions

Cream Cheese Frosting

8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
6 tablespoons (¼ stick) unsalted butter,
at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Juice of ½ lemon (optional)

1. Cream together the cream cheese and butter in a mixing bowl.
2. Slowly sift in the confectioners' sugar and continue beating until fully incorporated. The mixture should be free of lumps.
3. Stir in the vanilla, and lemon juice if desired.

Frosting for a 2-layer cake

Decadent Chocolate Cake

8 tablespoons (1 stick) unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing the pan
2 cups less 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour, sifted, plus extra for flouring the pan
1 cup boiling water
3 ounces unsweetened chocolate
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups sugar
2 eggs, separated
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 cup sour cream
1 teaspoon baking powder
Chocolate Frosting (recipe follows)

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan. Knock out the excess flour.
 2. Pour the boiling water over the chocolate and the butter; let stand until melted. Stir in the vanilla and sugar, then whisk in the egg yolks, one at a time, blending well after each addition.
 3. Mix the baking soda and sour cream and whisk into the chocolate mixture.
 4. Sift the flour and baking powder together and add to the batter, mixing thoroughly.
 5. Beat the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Stir a quarter of the egg whites thoroughly into the batter. Scoop the remaining egg whites on top of the batter and gently fold together.
 6. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Set on the center rack of the oven and bake until the edges have pulled away from the sides of the pan and a cake tester inserted into the center comes out clean, 40 to 50 minutes. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes; unmold and cool completely before frosting.
- 12 portions

Chocolate Frosting

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3/4 cup semisweet chocolate chips
6 tablespoons heavy cream
1 1/4 cups sifted confectioners' sugar, or as needed
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
Place all the ingredients in a heavy saucepan over low heat and whisk until smooth. Cool slightly; add more sugar if necessary to achieve a spreading consistency. Spread on the cake while the frosting is still warm.
Enough frosting for 1 cake