



Herb Roasted Organic Chicken Breast, Caramelized Root Vegetables, Dried Cherry and Tarragon Pearl Couscous

Nickel & Nickel Harris Vineyard Merlot, Oakville, Napa Valley

by Executive Chef Trevor Eliason

With spring in the air we thought we would put together a fun, seasonal recipe that goes great with the Nickel & Nickel Harris Merlot. This dish really highlights the bright fruits and luxurious structure of the wine. In the kitchen, we tested this dish several times. Not because we needed to work out any recipe flaws, but because we thought it was so delicious.

Ingredients

- 2 organic chicken breasts, bone-in
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt, to taste
- White pepper, to taste
- Brine:**
- 2 quarts cold water
- 1/4 cup salt
- 1/8 cup sugar
- 3 thyme sprigs
- 1 garlic clove, shelled
- 1 bay leaf
- 10 peppercorns
- 10 coriander seeds
- Pearl Couscous Salad:**
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 shallot, diced small
- 1 cup couscous
- 2-1/2 cup chicken stock
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup dried tart cherries, cut in half
- 1 tablespoon fresh tarragon, chopped
- 1/2 tablespoon Banyuls vinegar or sherry vinegar
- Black Trumpet Mushrooms:**
- 1 cup black trumpet mushrooms, washed and dried
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Caramelized Root Vegetables:**
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 large turnip, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 large parsnip, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 large sweet potato, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 large carrot, diced into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 tablespoon butter
- Salt and pepper, to taste

METHOD

To make the brine, add a quart of water to a medium-sized pot. Add 1/4 cup salt, 1/8 cup sugar, thyme, garlic, bay leaf, peppercorns and coriander seeds to the pot. Bring to a simmer, then shut off the heat and pour the brine into a container with a tight-fitting lid. Add the remaining quart of cold water to the brine and allow to cool to room temperature. Once cooled, add the raw chicken and place in the refrigerator overnight.

Remove the chicken from the brine and place on a paper towel-lined plate to dry. Discard the brine. Put a cast iron pan on medium heat and season chicken with salt and white pepper. Add olive oil to the pan, then add the chicken breasts skin side down. Sear for 3-5 minutes or until golden. Flip chicken over and place in a 350°F oven for 15 minutes. Baste chicken, using a spoon to capture the juices and reapply to top of chicken. Repeat a couple of times. Bake for 5 more minutes, or until the juices run clear from the chicken. Let rest for 5 more minutes, then slice the meat off the bone and cut each breast into three equal slices from there.

While chicken is cooking, start making the couscous. In a medium sauce pot, add olive oil then shallots and sweat for 30 seconds. Add couscous and stir for another 30 seconds. Add 2-1/2 cups chicken stock and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Stir and simmer for 8-10 minutes, or until the liquid is absorbed and the couscous is tender. Allow to cool.

Sauté mushrooms in a large pan with olive oil, salt and pepper for about 4-5 minutes. Set aside.

In a large sauté pan, add olive oil, and then add the diced root vegetables. Sauté on medium-high heat, stir and until caramelized, about 4 minutes. Then add 1 tablespoon of butter and set on low heat. Cook until tender.

To assemble, combine cooked couscous, chopped tarragon, halved dried cherries, Banyuls vinegar, black trumpet mushrooms and salt and pepper, to taste, in a medium bowl.

Place a heaping scoop of couscous salad in a strip on each warmed plate. Spoon roasted vegetables parallel to the couscous, then top with sliced chicken. Pop open a bottle of the Nickel & Nickel Harris Merlot and enjoy!

Serves 2