Cooking with wine

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WHENEVER you feel that wholesome meal cookery is becoming uninteresting, and that meals need "pepping up", try a recipe with wine. Judicious use of a little wine in cookery can make an amazing difference to everyday dishes.

Cooking with wine is just as easy as cooking with any other flavourings, like lemons, vanilla and other essences, spices, and so on. One does not need to be a "Cordon Bleu" graduate to be able to make interesting wine-flavoured dishes.

Firstly, it must be stressed that when wine is cooked it loses its alcoholic content—alcohol vaporises at 85 deg., so that it is all boiled away or evaporated off when food is heated. Cooked food flavoured with wine can therefore be given without qualms to children.

The flavour of wine becomes more and more mellow as cooking proceeds, therefore do not add wine too soon to a dish that requires two or three hours cooking—within the last half-hour is recommended.

Wine is a stimulant to the glands producing digestive juices—the salivary glands in the mouth and those associated with the stomach and duodenum—thus digestion is improved.

Wine has the following uses in cooking—

(1) As a flavouring agent—it adds "zest" to savoury and sweet dishes and accompaniments.

(2) To enhance other flavours—like salt, wine can also "bring out" flavours, particularly delicate flavours.

(3) As a colouring agent—wine helps with the colour and sparkle of clear soups, and jellies sweet and savoury.

(4) As a tenderiser—wine helps to break down the fibres of meat, making it more tender and releasing more flavour.

Classes of Wines

Wine can be classified as—

(1) Appetisers — Sherry and Vermouths.

(2) White Table Wines—Sauternes, Hock, Chablis, Riesling, Moselle, etc.

(3) Red Table Wines—Claret, Burgundy.

(4) Sparkling Wines — Champagne and Sparkling Hock, Moselle and Burgundy.

(5) Dessert Wines — Port, Muscat, Tokay, Madeira, Frontignac.
Wines are either "dry" (not sweet) or sweet, and cover a wide range in between medium-dry. Sherry is the most useful wine in cookery. Dry sherry can be used in all the savoury dishes, and sweet sherry in any sweet dish. Madeira can be used in place of sherry. Sherry and the dessert wines keep well when opened, but neither the red or white table wines nor the sparkling wines keep for any length of time. Left-over table wines can be used up in cooking in a variety of ways.

Soups
To clear soups (and jellied soups in summer) and to meat and vegetable soups add dry sherry or a red table wine. To creamed soups and light-coloured soups like fish, chicken, potato, celery and onion and so on, use sherry or a white table wine. Try one teaspoon wine per serving—taste for flavour and add more if liked.

Fish Dishes
If serving small pieces of fish in a white sauce or mornay, make the sauce using a tablespoon of wine to each cup of liquid. If using fillets of fish, allow a dessertspoon of wine for each fillet—approximately half-cup wine per pound of fish. For a fish casserole bake the fish in wine, then serve the wine and fish juice as a sauce, or thicken with a little cornflour. Try wine in place of vinegar or lemon with fried or grilled fish—use chablis, hock or dry sherry.

Savoury Sauces, Gravies and Dressings
Any white sauce or cheese sauce, or dishes like cauliflower cheese, macaroni cheese, celery-in-white-sauce, Welsh rarebit, tuna mornay, crayfish mornay and so on, can be given added zest by adding a white table wine or sherry—try a tablespoon wine to each cup of sauce.

Meat Dishes
Roasts
Baste roast beef, turkey and duck with a red table wine—claret or burgundy, and use port wine for game, like rabbit. Baste a ham with a sweet dessert wine. For each four pounds meat allow one cup of wine. Baste a chicken with a small cup of white wine and a little butter. Make gravy from the wine and meat juices in the baking dish—remove excess fat with clean blotting paper or folded tissues.

Pot Roasts and Boiled Meats
As above, use one cup of wine to each four pounds of meat, using red wine for dark meats and white wine or sherry for light meats.

Grilling and Frying
Marinade or soak the steak or cutlets in claret, burgundy or sherry for half to one hour before cooking. A little garlic or some finely sliced onion may be added to the wine, also a dash of hot sauce or some tomato sauce or puree. While the meat is cooking, season and thicken the marinade mixture to make a sauce to serve with the meat.

Casseroles, Braizes and Stews
Add about one tablespoon of wine to each one pound of meat, using claret, burgundy or sherry for red meats and white table wine or sherry for similar dishes of light meats like chicken, lamb, veal and so on.
Minced Meats

Any dish of minced and mixed meats like meat loaf, brawn, pies and pasties, rissoles, sausages, steak-and-kidney pudding, can be improved by adding a little wine to the gravy or mixing and binding liquid.

Sweet Dishes

Simple puddings, trifles, cake-puddings, moulded creams, jellies, fruit-sweets, souffles, sponges, flummery, ices and sauces of all descriptions can be flavoured with or have their flavours enhanced with wine. Sweet sherry or sauternes, port, muscat, tokay, madeira, can be used. A little wine can reduce a too-sweet taste as well as give a distinctive flavour.

Cooking with Spirits, Liqueurs, Cocktails.

Brandy and rum are often used in fruit cakes and puddings, sweet mincemeat, brandy or rum sauce, hard sauce, etc., and to flavour whipped cream, chocolate and coffee flavoured dishes, cakes and icings.

Liqueurs like Kirsch and Maraschino (almond flavoured) and others such as creme de menthe, Cointreau, creme de cacao and drambuie give a wonderful flavour, as do cocktails like apricot, cocktail, maison ruvee, and others such as cherry brandy, marsala, brandevino.

As these are so very concentrated, use only one or two drops, and taste for flavour before adding more. Use in ices, jellies, sauces, fruit salads, parfaits, ice-cream toppings, whips, icings and fillings.

If serving a hot sweet "flambe" or flaming, make sure it will flame successfully by heating the brandy or rum in a small saucepan first. As with wines, the alcohol will be burnt off, leaving the flavouring without its alcoholic content.

Storing Wines

Keep bottles in a cool dark cupboard. Light and air cause deterioration, so place each bottle on its side so that the cork is kept moist and cannot dry out, thus keeping it air-tight.

Some Recipes to Try

Cutlets in Wine

Choose lamb or veal. Trim lamb cutlets, or cut veal fillets into neat serving-sized pieces. Dip in seasoned flour then brown on both sides in a little butter or oil. Place in an ovenproof dish. Fry some thinly sliced onion—add a small clove of garlic if liked—till golden brown, and pour over the meat. Cover meat and onions with a layer of sliced tomatoes, sprinkle with breadcrumbs and pour in a wine glass of dry sherry, cover and cook till tender. Serve with mashed potato, green peas and diced or sliced carrots. (Thicken liquid with a little cornflour if the breadcrumbs have not thickened it sufficiently, or if more gravy is required. Cook a little flour in the pan after frying the onions—allow to brown very slightly before adding liquid).

Continental Beef Olives

Prepare thin slices of steak, chopped onion, and strips of bread, bacon and cheese. Roll up each slice of beef with bacon, bread, cheese, then add onion. Tie each "olive" securely. Make a well-flavoured brown sauce and after browning "olives" in a little fat, add them to the sauce to simmer till tender. Add a little chablis or sherry to the gravy half an hour before serving. (A simple beef olive can be made by wrapping the bacon and meat around a little sausage meat or bread stuffing).

Spiced Silverside

Boil silverside as usual until almost cooked. Lift on to a baking dish. Coat thickly with a paste made from half a cup each of brown sugar and breadcrumbs and one teaspoon each of cinnamon, mustard, grated orange and grated lemon rind. Stud with a few cloves, then bake in a moderately hot oven to brown the crust—baste frequently with a cup of sherry or claret or burgundy mixed with the juice of the orange and lemon. Serve with the usual boiled vegetables and white sauce, or lightly saute (fry and shake in a little fat) and coat vegetables thickly with chopped parsley.

Fruit Whip

Take a cup of unsweetened fruit pulp—use peach, pear, apricot or apple or prunes. Make a meringue mixture from two egg whites, a pinch of cream of tartar and from half to three quarters of a cup of sugar, depending on the sweetness of the

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fruit. Carefully fold in the fruit pulp and a teaspoon of wine, or a drop or two of liqueur. Add colouring if desired. Serve in individual sweet dishes or parfait glasses with jelly or cream. Use the egg yolks to make a custard.

Zabaglione

Put three egg yolks, three teaspoons sugar and a tablespoon Marsala in top half of a double saucepan or a basin that will fit over another saucepan. Beat steadily with a rotary beater over hot (not boiling) water until mixture becomes thick and fluffy and there is no raw egg taste. Scrape sides and bottom occasionally while beating. Remove from heat and stand pan or basin in cool water and beat a little longer to prevent curdling. Serve hot or chilled in parfait glasses, garnished with a sprinkling of nutmeg, cinnamon or grated chocolate or grated orange rind.

Chocolate Souffle

1 oz. almonds, blanched, shredded and lightly browned.
3 eggs—separated.
2 oz. castor sugar.
2 oz. cooking chocolate.
1 level tablespoon gelatine softened in two tablespoons water rum.
½ pint to ¾ pint cream.

Method

Melt chocolate, gelatine over low heat until dissolved. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar over hot water until thick and creamy.

Remove from heat and stir in the almonds, chocolate, gelatine and a teaspoon of rum. When cool but not set, fold in the whipped cream and then the stiffly beaten egg whites. Pour into a souffle dish (straight sides) which has greaseproof paper tied around it so that mixture will come above the sides of the dish (imitating a risen, cooked souffle). When set, remove paper carefully and press coconut or chopped nuts around sides, and decorate top with piped whipped cream, nuts and cherries.

To vary the flavour of this cold souffle, use a little coffee essence as well to make a Mocha flavour, or substitute vanilla, for the rum. Replace the chocolate with finely pureed fruit—strawberries or apricot are most suitable—and use an essence and suitable colouring to match the chosen flavour. Cherry brandy and pink colouring with chopped cherries and cherries to decorate top would be in keeping or green colouring, creme de menthe and angelica, and so on. Be imaginative with flavours and combinations, and invent a glamorous name for each dish, too!

Too Much Spoils The Flavour!

Finally, a word of warning. As with most flavouring agents, enough is delightful but too much spoils the flavour. Be careful not to overdo it, particularly with the concentrated spirits, liqueurs, etc. Consider the basic menu—planning principles, too—if you are having, say, chicken and almonds with wine, leave the wine flavoured soup or fish dish or the sherryed fruit and chantilly cream for another menu.

---NOT TOO MUCH!