



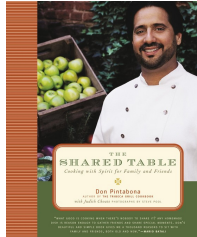
ORIEL

RABBIT CACCIATORE

*Don Pintabona, 'The Shared Table'*

WINE PAIRING: PALIO

SERVES 6



Braises and stews such as this tomato-based dish were popular in Italian peasant cooking because a little meat could be stretched to flavor a sauce that could then be extended with pasta, rice, or bread. Rabbit dishes could also be found at the heart of almost any peasant cooking, since rabbit was (and still is) fairly easily caught and offers good, lean protein at no cost, except to the nerves of the hunter. Cacciatore-style was also used to cook poultry; however, in poorer families, chickens were not easily given up to the stewpan, as the eggs that they provided were even more important to the table. Most specialty butchers now carry rabbit as well as wild hard, so recipes once almost impossible to duplicate unless you had a hunter in the family are now simple to prepare.

PREPARATION

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| 6 white peppercorns   | 1 onion, peeled and diced                             |
| 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped                           | 1 large carrot, peeled, trimmed, and diced            |
| 1 teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary                             | 3 cups dry red wine                                   |
| 1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest                          | One 28-ounce can crushed peeled Italian plum tomatoes |
| 1/2 teaspoon coarse salt, plus more to taste                  | 2 cups chicken broth                                  |
| 1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons olive oil                          | 1 bay leaf  |
| One 3-pound rabbit, cleaned, well washed, and cut into pieces | Freshly ground pepper                                 |
| 1/4 cup all-purpose flour                                     | Red pepper flakes                                     |
| 12 ounces button mushrooms, stemmed and cleaned               | 1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley               |
| 2 ribs celery, well washed, trimmed, and diced                |   |

1. Place the peppercorns, garlic, rosemary, lemon zest, and salt in a mortar. Pour in the 3 tablespoons oil and, using the pestle, grind the mixture into a coarse paste.
2. Rub the seasoning into the rabbit pieces. Place the seasoned rabbit in a shallow dish, cover, and marinate for 30 minutes.
3. Lightly dust the rabbit with the flour, shaking off any excess.
4. Heat the 1/4 cup oil in a large, heavy-bottomed casserole-type pan over medium-high heat. Add the rabbit and sear, turning frequently, for about 7 minutes, or until nicely browned. Add the mushrooms, celery, onion, and carrot and sauté for about 5 minutes, or until the vegetables have just begun to soften. Add the red wine and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer for about 6 minutes, or until the liquid has reduced by half. Raise the heat and add the tomatoes, broth, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, season with salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes to taste, and lower the heat to a simmer. Cover and cook at a bare simmer for about 1 1/2 hours, or until the meat is very tender and the sauce has thickened. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Stir in the parsley and remove from the heat. Serve hot with pasta, gnocchi, rice, polenta, or mashed potatoes.

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