



Crostini of seared pigeon breast with sweet balsamic dressing

Here's a Mediterranean style delicacy that is really light and easy to prepare. It makes a great change from the heartier game dishes in rich sauces that are fine for winter days. This one's more of a tasty snack or starter - and woodpigeon are available all year round.

Toast bread rolls, halved and drizzled with olive oil, in an oven preheated to 200C (Mark 6). Skin the pigeon breast and carve the two supremes from the breast bone. As with most game, we prefer pigeon cooked rare as nature intended. The more you cook it, the more you lose. If you're not careful, it'll taste like a pair of old boots.

Brown the pigeon breasts in oil and butter in a hot, heavy bottomed pan. This takes a minute or so each side, no more. Remove from pan, dab off excess oil with kitchen paper and allow to rest for a couple of minutes.

Game likes a touch of sweetness, so here we've cooked down kumquats (baby oranges) with sugar and a touch of Cointreau to create a chutney which contrasts with the natural flavour of the pigeon.

For the sweet balsamic dressing, heat balsamic vinegar with port, red wine and sugar. Add cinnamon bark, a clove and orange zest. Render down to a syrupy consistency, probably by about three-quarters of the original volume.

Place the pigeon breasts on rocket salad on top of the crostini and decorate as in the picture.

Recommended wine: Bourgogne Rouge, Dureuil-Janthial, 2003

Ingredients

Serves four

Pigeon breasts - 4
Bread rolls - 2 medium
Rocket salad - 100g
or 4 small handfuls

Chutney

Kumquats - 20
Sugar - 150g
Cointreau - 50ml

Sweet balsamic dressing (for this and other recipes)

Balsamic vinegar - 500ml
Port - 100ml
Red wine - 100ml
Sugar - 200g
Cinnamon bark - 1 stick
Clove - 1
Orange - Zest of 1

