

Lepre in Salmi/Jugged Hare (for 4)

modified from the wonderful Antonio Carluccio, with a nod to the lovely David Waltuck for the treatment of the loin

for the marinade:

1 (750 ml) strong red wine, such as Barolo)
1 carrot, finely diced
1 onion, finely chopped
4 celery ribs, finely diced
1 garlic clove, smashed
a few sprigs of thyme
a few sprigs of marjoram
a few sage leaves
a few bay leaves
10 juniper berries
1 tsp black peppercorns, lightly crushed

for the hare: [note this recipe is for a quite large hare; the one I had weighed about 3.25 pounds, but I didn't pare down the ingredients]

1 large hare (**6.5 lbs**), blood reserved
scant 1/4 cup flour
scant 1/2 cup butter (4 oz)
1 onion, very finely chopped
3 1/2 oz pancetta, diced
7 ounces calves liver (I used lamb's liver the first time I worked with this recipe), cut into small strips
3 tbs Brandy
1 3/4 oz unsweetened chocolate (use much less, and add more only if it seems necessary)
salt and pepper

Mix all the ingredients for the marinade into a large bowl. Cut the hare into large pieces, **but carefully remove the two pieces of loin from the bone of the saddle, intact**. Add all of the meat, including loins and scraps, to the marinade, cover and leave in the refrigerator for 24 to 36 hours.

Remove the chunks of meat from the marinade, drain them well, and pat dry. Reserve the marinade. **Wrap and return the loins to the refrigerator until needed.** Dredge the remaining pieces of meat and the scraps in some of the (seasoned) flour. Heat the butter in a large cast-iron skillet or pot, and fry the pieces of meat, a few at a time, until browned all over. Remove from the pan and set aside. Reduce the heat, add the onion and pancetta to the pan, and fry until the onion begins to color. Return the meat to the pan together with the blood, calves' liver, and the marinade. Cover and cook gently for 2 hours, or until the meat is tender. **Note: The front legs will be done first, and should be removed when tender, lightly covered, and set aside. Near the end of the cooking time, remove the loins from the refrigerator, allowing them to come to room temperature.**

Turn off the heat, and remove the pieces of hare and liver from the pan (**removing some or all of the meat from the bone, if you prefer**) and set aside. Strain the sauce throughout a fine sieve, and discard the remaining solids. Mix together the brandy and just enough of the remaining flour to make a paste. Put the meat and the strained liquid (**perhaps not all of it if there is a great amount**) back in the pan and bring to a boil. Whisk in the flour and brandy paste a little at a time to thicken. Let it boil for a minute or two **then add the chocolate, a little at a time**, allow it to dissolve, and season with salt and pepper to taste. **[Can be prepared up to a couple of days in advance]**

While keeping the hare and its sauce warm (**or warming it up if it was prepared earlier**) heat 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of oil in a sauté pan until very hot. Blot the loins dry, then brown on all sides (2 to 3 minutes total cooking time for a 3-4 pound hare). Do not overcook, as the loins should be quite rare.

Serve with polenta or pappardelle on 4 warmed plates, reserving a bit of the sauce for the loins. Slice the

loins crosswise, like medallions, and divide among the plates.

Important: Scatter a little parsley on top, and serve.