

CHICKEN IN MASCARPONE AND WHITE WINE SAUCE

SERVES TWO QUITE GREEDY PEOPLE, BUT IT DEPENDS ON THE SIZE OF THE CHICKEN BREASTS – THEY ARE VERY LARGE IN ITALY, AND IT WOULD EASILY SERVE 3 TO 4.

This was the dish most often requested this summer, and it's one that I made up when I couldn't think what to cook. There are so many different versions of this dish! I use mascarpone because when I first started making this I used crème fraîche – which you can't get here in Italy. For a variety on this theme, you can replace the oregano with fresh tarragon, and the mascarpone with crème fraîche, plus the juice of half a lemon – and that is also delicious.

This is another dish that can be prepared in advance – just reheat the chicken (making sure it's cooked through) in the sauce just before serving.

INGREDIENTS

2		Chicken breasts – no bone or skin
1	glass	dry white wine
3/4	pint	chicken stock
250	gm	mascarpone
2	tsp	dried oregano
3		bay leaves
		salt and pepper to taste
2	tbsp	olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

There are several ways to prepare the chicken breast, but ideally you need to create some smaller pieces that have the approximate size and shape of the chicken breast fillet. Remove the fillet first, and the slice horizontally through the breast to form two thinner pieces. Each of these can then be cut into two. Of course, this depends on the size of the breasts – in Italy they are huge, but I know that smaller pieces are available in the UK. The important thing is to make sure they are thin enough to cook reasonably quickly. If you are just making this for a midweek meal, you can also cut the chicken into cubes – it's quick and easy!

Heat the olive oil in a deep frying pan, and add the chicken pieces. You can do this in a number of stages if you are cooking for more than 2 people, as you can't cook too much of the chicken at one time. The chicken will probably spit as the water comes out – so beware! The aim is to lightly brown the chicken, but not to cook it through – so a high heat, and a short time, and not too many pieces at once. When all your chicken pieces have been sealed, put them back in the pan and add the oregano and bay leaves, plus the white wine. Cook on a high heat, and reduce until the wine has nearly evaporated, then add the chicken stock. Boil until slightly reduced, and then remove the chicken. It should be well cooked through by now. Keep the chicken warm. Boil to reduce the liquid to a thin layer on the base of the pan, probably half an inch, then lower the heat and add the mascarpone, using a whisk to incorporate. Add plenty of pepper, but you may not need salt, depending on the type of stock you used. The sauce should be thick and coat the back of a spoon. Return the chicken to the pan to reheat, adjust seasoning and serve.