



Poultry, Meat & Game

MY FRIEND ALVIN has a Hainanese brother-in-law. Hainan? I didn't know either. It's an island in the South China Sea off the coast of China. The *Penguin Concise* informs me that rubber and fishing are the major industries and that rice, sugar, tobacco and coffee are grown all year round.

This information doesn't explain to me the reason why when you mention to Alvin his brother in-law's nationality his eyes roll back in his head and his tongue lolls in a very unbecoming manner.

"You don't know Hainan cuisine?" Alvin squawks when he resumes a more gentlemanly posture. "How is that possible? Darling, you haven't lived!"

What can I say? My mouth waters as I type. He gave me a recipe.

Hainan Chicken

1 large	chicken
2 cloves	garlic, crushed
1 1/2 tbsp	ginger, bruised
2 tbsp	sesame oil
2 cups	fresh vegetables
6	red chilies, seeds removed
1 clove	garlic, thinly sliced
1 tbsp	ginger, sliced
2 tsp	sugar
1 tsp each	salt and vinegar
2 tbsp	chicken stock (or water)
4 cups	cooked rice

Boil water in a large pot. Clean the chicken, cutting off the neck and wings. Reserve. Add ginger and garlic to the pot. Carefully lower the chicken into the boiling water. Do not cover. Let it boil for two minutes then turn off the heat. Leave the chicken to cool in the pot for twenty minutes.

Repeat the boiling process and cool for another twenty minutes. Test to see if the chicken is cooked with a toothpick. When cooked, take the chicken out of the pot and place it in a colander. Run cold water all over the bird, including the cavity. Brush with a mixture of sesame oil and soy sauce and leave it to drain in the colander in the sink.

In the remaining stock from the pot add the neck and wings and cook for 10 minutes.

Season the stock with two cups of vegetables — carrots, broccoli or whatever — and simmer until cooked. Keep a few tablespoons of the stock for the chili sauce.

Chili Sauce: Blend all the ingredients. Add to a little boiling chicken stock, stir well and place in a bowl.

To serve place some rice on a large serving platter, cut the chicken into small pieces and arrange with the vegetables. Pour a little soy sauce over the dish and sprint out to your adoring fans at table.

SIX P.M. FRIDAY. I rashly invited ten people to dinner. I hadn't gone shopping, hadn't ironed the napkins, or cleaned the bathroom, or given the meal much thought. Luckily I had brought one of my bulging recipe books with me.

There I was, roaring out to a hard-currency store (translation: sitting in a tunnel in a traffic jam on Moscow's notorious ring road getting gassed by truck fumes), flipping madly through the book, racking my brains for a good hearty dish that would feed the hungry hoards about to descend.

Persian chicken, a variation from a recipe by Madhur Jaffrey. It looked tasty. But there was one drawback. Where do I find the three cups of plain yogurt called for in the recipe in a city this size? Do all retailers think we can live on strawberry, blueberry, banana and sickly kiwi fruit alone? Yogurt. Just plain and simple.

I had a lot of delicious locally-made sour cream — *smetana* — in the fridge and had made up my mind (sprinting along the aisles, knocking shoppers everywhere, crushing kiddies) to do the dish — but with *smetana* instead.

It probably would mean most of my guests would die of cholesterol overload before dessert, but it was a risk I was willing to take.

Luckily, my dinner companions and I were saved by my current house guests. When I got home, I discovered that Anne and Ivan had lined up at the new Danone yogurt store on Ulitsa Tverskaya for half a morning and had come out with a lot of booty.

Naturally, I became overwhelmed and gushy, handed them a celebratory beer for cleverness, wiped tears of joy from my eyes, and got on with the dinner.

Persian Chicken

10	chicken drumsticks
1/5 cup	vegetable oil
1	cinnamon stick
10	cloves, crushed
2	cardamon pods
1 large	onion, finely sliced
5 cups	plain yogurt
5 tbsp	coriander seeds, crushed
2 tbsp	ground cumin
1/2 cup	raisins
1 tbsp	peppercorns, crushed
1 cup	fresh coriander, chopped

Skin the chicken and pat each drumstick dry with absorbent paper. Set aside. In a large heavy-based saucepan, heat 1/3 cup oil. When very hot, add the cinnamon stick, cloves and cardamon. Stir quickly to release the aroma for about a minute, then turn the heat down. Remove the cinnamon.

Brown the chicken and reserve. Add the onions and cook until brown. While they are browning, mix together the yogurt, crushed coriander seeds, ground cumin, raisins, peppercorns and 1/2 cup of fresh chopped coriander. Return the chicken to the saucepan and pour the sauce over them, stirring well so all the drumsticks are covered.

Turn the heat down further and cook, covered for half an hour. Check the chicken is cooked, add the rest of the coriander and serve hot.

PEOPLE HAVE LIVED WITHOUT IT for years, and in the case of the Russian cooking repertoire, forever. I must confess I carry it with me when I travel, but that is only for extreme emergencies, like going to Belarus. I believe it calms the nerves, but more than anything, you can't beat ginger for lifting any dish.

This week, one of Moscow's hard currency supermarkets has taken up the challenge and offered it for sale. The time has come, I say, to break out the bubbly and baste a bird.

A Chinese dish.

Step one: Dust off the bottle of soy sauce. There's always a bottle lying around the kitchen, dark, brooding and salty. The beans from which this fermented sauce is made have been cultivated in Asia for about 5,000 years... and some people have bottles of the same vintage in their cupboards. I do. I just never manage to finish one bottle before I get more.

Time to toss out the old and buy some new stuff. For this recipe you will need light and dark soy if you can find both and that clever little dried spice — star anise. It is used in Causasian and Tartar cooking so it is plentiful around this town. Look for the strong smelling, hard, star-shaped spice. You will need to keep it apart from your other spices as it has a tendency to invade. The last thing you need are aniseed flavored bay leaves or pepper. If you find the spice too strong, substitute it with a little fennel, either fresh or in the form of seeds.

Soy Sauce Chicken

<i>1 large</i>	chicken, washed and patted dry
<i>1 cup</i>	dark soy sauce
<i>1 cup</i>	light soy sauce
<i>1/4 cup</i>	brown sugar, firmly packed
<i>1 whole</i>	star anise, crushed
<i>5 tbsp</i>	sherry
<i>2 cloves</i>	garlic, crushed
<i>2 tbsp</i>	ginger, peeled
<i>1 tbsp</i>	sesame oil (for brushing the bird)
<i>2 tbsp</i>	spring onions, cut in 2-cm pieces
<i>4 cups</i>	cooked rice

In a heavy saucepan large enough to cook the chicken, stir together the soy sauces, one cup of water, the brown sugar, the star anise, sherry, garlic and ginger. Bring the mixture to the boil, stirring so the sugar has dissolved, and place the chicken in the pan. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Turn the bird over and simmer for another fifteen minutes, making sure all the flesh is in contact with the sauce. After half an hour it should be cooked. Test this by piercing the flesh with a toothpick. If the juice comes out clear and colorless, it is ready.

Remove the chicken and let it drain in a colander. Cut the chicken up into small pieces, brush the skin with sesame oil and transfer to a large platter. Garnish with the spring onions and served with hot fluffy rice.

YOU ONLY MISTAKE a boiler chicken for a young one once. It is six o'clock, you have a dinner party to prepare and you are in a hurry, racing into one of Moscow's four decent hard currency supermarkets you have to move and plan a meal fast. There are dozens of people milling about the freezers, you lunge in, grab a frozen chicken shape that announces its chickenness in several unknown languages and race to the check-out mentally organizing table seating arrangements and how best to baste this young bird — with rosemary or garlic and soy.

What happens of course is an hour before the guests arrive you find yourself whimpering beside the oven, basting like mad, urging the scrawny bird to miraculously discover the fountain of youth while you contemplate a quick exit down the fire escape. Head first.

I have bought such birds and I know others have confessed the same error. The mistake lies not in the poor chicken itself, but our reluctance to boil older non-fatty chickens.

Saved by the citizens of Ghent. This delicious casserole takes about two hours so give yourself plenty of time.

Waterzooï Chicken

<i>1</i>	boiling fowl
<i>Juice of 1</i>	lemon
<i>2 medium</i>	onions
<i>4</i>	cloves
<i>1</i>	bouquet garni
<i>5 sticks</i>	celery, chopped
<i>5</i>	leeks, sliced
<i>1 medium</i>	carrot, sliced
<i>5/4 cup</i>	cream
<i>2 cups</i>	dry white wine
<i>Plus</i>	salt and pepper

Defrost the chicken and rub it over with the lemon juice. In a large heavy-based casserole, place the chicken with the two onions studded with cloves. Add enough water to cover the chicken and bring to the boil. Once the bird is bubbling furiously add a bouquet garni, two cups of dry white wine, leeks, celery, salt and pepper.

Simmer, covered, for one and half hours or more if necessary. To serve remove the bouquet garni, cut the chicken into pieces and set aside. Remove the vegetables from the liquid and also set aside.

Turn up the heat so the sauce will reduce by half. Once you have a thick sauce add the cream, return the chicken and the vegetables and serve piping hot.

COMING HOME FROM WORK ravenously hungry, I had hoped to pick up something tasty from the *babushki* selling vegetables outside Novoslobodskaya metro station, but there was nothing to be had besides vodka and daisies — a shame because I knew it was more than was in my refrigerator. Once in the kitchen my worst fears were confirmed. Inside the refrigerator were wilted vegetables, dried curly bacon and one egg.

The sight of limp eggplants just didn't rouse me to culinary heights. In fact, to punish myself I started leafing through my bulging recipe folder to see the results of years of collecting recipes and ideas. Some are downright silly, like warm baby octopus salad with a chili and sesame sauce, (Fawlty Bowers restaurant on Fawlty Bowers beach in Sydney).

When I reached wild guinea fowl with cabbage (transcribed while my friend Olivier cooked it for me in his tiny Paris kitchen) I finally broke down. Was it my crazed imagination or could I smell the dish on the paper that was written almost a year ago?

Pouring an even larger glass of medicinal sherry than usual, I relived the memory. Well! All hope was lost after that. I bravely faced the refrigerator again and dragged out the contents. It's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle: you know there's a dish there somewhere if you just arrange the ingredients in the right way. Carrot soup? Not enough carrots and I don't have a blender. Ratatouille? Nope. Looks like it's going to be stir-fry noodles again.

Cook. Eat. Weep. Retire to bed with a good book, dreaming of gourmet restaurants and vowing to shop every week at hard-currency stores no matter what your bank manager threatens.

Pintarde aux Choux

<i>1-kg</i>	guinea fowl
<i>2 cups</i>	cabbage
<i>1 cup</i>	bacon, diced
<i>1 tbsp</i>	butter
<i>2 small</i>	onions, thinly sliced
<i>5 small</i>	carrots, thinly sliced
<i>2 cups</i>	chicken stock
<i>1 cup</i>	Burgundy
<i>1 tbsp</i>	Dijon mustard
<i>Plus</i>	salt and pepper

Choose a guinea fowl that is about eight months old. Burn the feathers that remain on the bird over the burner of a gas flame. Wash and pat dry. Cut off the outer layers of cabbage, slice it in half and blanch it for about 5 minutes in boiling water.

In a heavy-based saucepan brown the guinea fowl quickly on all sides, remove. Cut the bacon into small pieces and cook in a little butter. Add the carrots and onions which have been thinly sliced. After 10 minutes add the fowl. Season and place the blanched cabbage around the bird so it is a tight fit.

Pour in 2 cups of stock with a generous tablespoon of Dijon mustard stirred in and 1 cup red wine. Cook for 20 minutes or so with the lid on. Taste, add more stock if needed and keep cooking until it is tender.

To serve the guinea fowl, cut into pieces and serve on a bed of cabbage with all the juices. A hearty Burgundy, good company and fresh bread also recommended.