

Pigeon Pie

Ingredients

Serves 5 - 6

5 fl oz (150 ml) red wine

2 tablespoons (30 ml) port

6 juniper berries, crushed

2 tablespoons (30 ml) vegetable oil

4 pigeons

1 oz (25 g) butter

1 tbsp (15 ml) vegetable oil

1 onion, finely chopped

4 rashers streaky bacon, rinds removed, chopped

12 oz (350 g) chuck steak, trimmed and cut into 1 inch (2.5 cm) cubes

6 oz (175 g) flat mushrooms, thickly sliced

few sprigs of parsley, chopped

1/2 tsp dried thyme

12 oz (350 g) short crust pastry

Method

1. Mix together wine, port, juniper berries and oil for the marinade and season with freshly ground black pepper. Remove breasts from the pigeons and cut into large pieces. Put into a non-metallic dish, pour over the marinade, cover. Leave in fridge overnight.

2. Melt the butter and oil in a frying pan, add the onion and bacon and fry gently for 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon, reserve.

3. Remove pigeon from the marinade, drain. Reserve marinade. Increase heat and fry the pigeon and the steak in batches, sealing on all sides.

4. Put the pigeon, steak, onion and bacon into a 2 pint (1.25 litre) pie dish and top with the mushrooms. Sprinkle with herbs, pour over the reserved marinade.

5. Roll out the pastry to 1/4 inch (5 mm) thick, put a pie funnel into the dish. Cut a 1/2 inch (1 cm) strip of pastry and place around the edge of the dish. Brush with water and top with the remaining pastry. Use the pastry trimmings to decorate the top of the pie.

6. Bake at Mark 4 (180°C) 350°F for 20 minutes, then reduce the heat to Mark 2 (150°C) 300°F and cook for a further 1 1/2 hours. Cover the pastry with foil if it browns too much during cooking