

Faggot of Herdwick Hogget with Shallot Cream and Spinach



by Ryan Blackburn
Cottage in the Wood, near Keswick

The Cottage in the Wood Country Hotel and restaurant is situated in the heart of the Whinlatter forest near Keswick. Their philosophy towards food is to use the best possible produce and seasonal ingredients to create simple and appealing meals. The herdwick they use in this recipe comes from Yew Tree Farm in Borrowdale, just a few miles up the road. Hogget is the meat produced from sheep over a year old, and is full of flavour.



Serves 6-8

Ingredients:

2.5kg shoulder of hogget or lamb
1 medium onion, diced
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
3 celery sticks, diced
250ml red wine
50g unsalted butter
30g plain flour
3 sprigs fresh thyme
1 garlic bulb, halved
1½ litres fresh beef stock
2 litres fresh chicken stock
6 large Savoy cabbage leaves
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Vegetable oil for frying
200g shallots, finely sliced
200g onions, finely sliced
100g unsalted butter
300g spinach

Method

Preheat oven to 180°C

1. Season the meat well with salt and colour in vegetable oil in a very hot pan until dark brown on all sides. Transfer to a suitable casserole pan.
2. Deglaze the browning pan with a little water and add this to the meat.
3. Melt the butter in the same pan that was used to brown the meat and cook the vegetables in the butter until golden brown. Add these to the hogget.
4. Stir the red wine into the casserole pan. Bring to the boil and reduce until it becomes a glaze then stir in the flour and mix well. Add the thyme, garlic, beef and chicken stock to the casserole and bring to the boil. Take off the heat, place a lid on top and cook in the oven for 2½ to 3 hours.
5. When cooked, the hogget should be very tender so that you can cut it with a spoon and the sauce rich and dark in colour. Allow the casserole to cool down before removing the hogget with a slotted spoon and passing the sauce through a fine sieve.
6. Using your hands finely shred the hogget removing the bones, fat and sinew. Add some of the sauce to the hogget until you get a moist sticky texture and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper.
7. Roll the mixture into 150g balls and place in the fridge to cool down.
8. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil and cook the cabbage until tender, remove from the water and refresh in iced water.
9. Remove the tough stalk from the cabbage. Spread the cabbage leaf on a square of cling film and place a ball of the cold hogget in the centre. Bring the cling film and cabbage up around the hogget and tie securely ensuring that all the air is removed and that it is water tight. Place in a fridge until required.



For the shallot cream

1. Melt the butter in a large pan, add 3tbsp of water and the shallots and onions and cook over a low heat for 10-15 minutes so they become tender and sweet.
2. Transfer to a liquidizer and blend until smooth and creamy, season with salt and white pepper.

To serve

1. Bring a large pan of water to the boil and turn down so it is at a gentle simmer. Place the faggots in the water and cook for 12-15 minutes or until warm in the centre.
2. Warm up the shallot cream and add 300g of spinach and cook until the spinach has wilted.
3. Divide the shallot and spinach between preheated plates.
4. Remove the faggot from the cling film and carefully place on top of the spinach and pour some of the reserved sauce over.