

Turkey, Hunter's Style

This recipe for tacchino alla cacciatora is from Julia della Croce's cookbook "Umbria." The book explores the foods and traditions of the region of Italy and is filled with great recipes. Turkey, either wild or farm raised, is eaten all over Umbria but not the whole roasted bird we are accustomed to in North America. An simple dish to put together that turns turkey thighs into a very tasty meal. We mostly use thighs but occasionally we use the drumstick and thigh. I saw a neat trick a number of years ago on one of Julia Child and Jacques Pepin's T.V. cooking shows. They were using the turkey drumsticks. Tried it, works great...just cut off the bone about 1 1/2" from the bottom so you can get at the area where the tendons are (at the bottom end of the drum). Remove the tendons using pliers that are used for cooking purposes only, then continue with the recipe.

Makes 4 Servings

2 whole turkey thighs (1 1/2 lbs. each)
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
6 large cloves garlic, crushed but left whole
1 fresh rosemary sprig, about 8" long, or 1 tsp. crumbled dried rosemary
3/4 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup meat broth, or as needed **
4 large fresh sage leaves, minced, or 1/2 tsp. crumbled dried sage
8 juniper berries, ground
3/4 tsp. sea salt, or to taste
Freshly ground black pepper

Saw or hack each thigh through the bone into 3 pieces, (your butcher might do this for you however, I left mine whole). Rinse the turkey pieces & dry well. In a heavy-bottomed, large, wide skillet ample enough to accommodate the turkey pieces without crowding, combine the oil, garlic & the rosemary, if using fresh. Place over medium-low heat & warm gently, pressing down occasionally with a wooden spoon to release the flavours from the garlic & the rosemary. Do not allow the garlic to colour beyond a golden hue. This should take 5 – 6 minutes. Discard the garlic & the rosemary sprig.

Raise the heat to a fairly lively temperature & slip the turkey pieces into the skillet. I start them skin-down, then brown on all sides, about 15 minutes. Add the wine & let the alcohol evaporate, about 3 minutes. Now add the 1/2 cup broth, the rosemary (if using dried), the sage & the juniper berries, stirring to distribute all the ingredients. Reduce the heat to low, cover & cook until the turkey is tender, about 45 minutes. Remove the cover occasionally to stir the meat in order to prevent sticking, re-covering the pan each time. If the turkey seems to be drying out, add more broth as needed to keep it well bathed in cooking liquid.

When the turkey is thoroughly tender, season with salt & pepper to taste. Transfer to a warmed platter & serve immediately.

Note: I seasoned my turkey pieces a bit before browning them but you will note that it is not called for in the recipe, it's just how I do things. For the meat stock, I either use veal stock or a combination of beef & chicken or turkey stock, depending on what's in the freezer. If you choose to cook the thighs in one piece, carve the thighs before serving.

****If you would like to make your own stock, please go to How to Make Stock.**