

Pan fried quail breast & confit leg, with a green grape and tarragon beurre blanc

Serves 6

Ingredients

We allow 3 quail for 2 people as a main course. So 3 breasts and 3 legs each.
Prepare the quail as per the instructions below

Stock:

Quail carcasses and wings
1 carrot, roughly chopped
1 celery stick, roughly chopped
1 onion, roughly chopped
1 sprig of thyme, 1 bay leaf, few peppercorns

Confit:

3 legs per person
1 sprig of thyme, 1 bay leaf, few peppercorns
300g duck fat (or olive oil)

Tarragon & Crémant beurre blanc:

1 shallot or white onion finely chopped
1 bay leaf / 5 white or pink peppercorns
20-40 mls / 1-2 tbs of white wine vinegar
80 mls / 4 tbs sparkling wine
(we use local Crémant de Limoux)
120 mls / 6 tbs quail stock
40 ml single cream
tarragon leaves to taste
handful of fresh green grapes
25 g cold diced butter **per person** to thicken
and enrich the sauce

Watercress or wilted spinach, fondant
Pommes Anna potatoes to serve

Method:

Prepare the quail

Cutting up a quail is similar to any form of poultry – there just smaller! This video gives an easy method that we use ([Great British Chefs - quail](#)).



Quail is a small ground-nesting game bird in the pheasant family. It is sadly often ignored by people in restaurants because it is deemed to be too fiddly.

In this recipe, we describe a method of breaking down a quail. This technique is applicable to any form of fowl. We highlight two methods of cooking quail breast and a method to confit the legs.



The accompaniments can be seasonal; spinach or watercress, parsnip or celeriac puree, fried quail's eggs with truffle salt. It is open to your imagination....!

Free the wishbone - peel back the skin at the rear of the quail and with a sharp knife gently cut along the outside of the wishbone on each side starting at the top and working your way down. Then with your fingers carefully reach in and free the top of the wishbone then remove it.

Remove the wings - fold the wing to pop the joint and cut through the joint to remove each wing

Remove the legs - cut the skin between the legs and the body. Cut around the leg and then gently bend the leg away from the body to 'pop' the joint. Then cut through the joint and flesh to remove both legs.

Remove breasts - Cut along the breast of the quail bone keeping your knife as close to the breastbone as possible. Carefully slice the breasts away from the body by slicing not sawing. Trim off any excess fat or skin. The breasts should be an even shape with a good cover of skin to stop them drying out. Put aside until ready to use.

Make leg "bon-bons" - carefully separate the flesh from the thigh bone to reveal the thigh/leg joint and then twist the thigh bone and remove it. Just below the joint on each leg cut around the joint with a knife and push the flesh towards the thigh then snip the little knuckle off the leg on an angle. Remove any white tendons. Take the leg and carefully fold it over and push it through the skin to make a little lollipop, tuck in the flesh and skin and push the flesh towards the joint.

Quail breasts – with jambon sec

Season the quail breasts.

Lay out three thicknesses of cling film three times the length of the breast. Lay down a piece of the ham, flatten the breast slightly, season and roll the quail breast in the ham as tight as you can. Place the rolled breast on the cling film and roll. Tie off each of the ends of the roll and leave in the fridge to chill for at least 30 minutes

Quail breasts – with tarragon

Gently lift the skin and insert some tarragon leaves and butter to baste.

Confit Quail legs

Lightly salt the leg bon-bons and place them in a small ovenproof container – leave for 20 mins maximum then wash off the salt, return to the container and cover with melted duck fat and herbs of your choice (we use thyme, bay, peppercorns). These can be baked for 45 minutes at 95C until soft and the juices run clear when you are ready. They should then rest on a kitchen paper to drain the excess fat. The legs can be pan fried to brown them at the same time as the breasts.

Quail stock

The remainder of the body can now be used to make the stock. Cut the body in half and remove any kidneys/liver that may remain. If these are difficult to remove then with a pair of cutters cut ribs to only use the not 'bloody' sections as the blood will make the stock bitter. Trim off any fat.

Place the bones in a large saucepan and brown with a little olive oil. Add the onion, carrots, celery, leeks and brown together in the pan with the quail carcasses.

Add enough water to cover and the peppercorns, bay leaves, parsley and then bring to the boil.

Simmer for 1 hour, skimming any fat and scum that rises to the top.

Carefully remove the all bones with tongs and allow the stock to continue to simmer until it has reduced by half.

Pass through a sieve and reserve for the sauce.

Tarragon and Crémant Beurre Blanc

Melt a knob of butter in a small pan, soften the shallot or white onion. Once the shallot is softened add a bay leaf, the peppercorns and vinegar and reduce by **2/3rds**. Add the wine and reduce again by **2/3rds**. Add the stock and reduce by **1/2** until you have a syrupy sauce.

(If you wish, you can add a ¼ tsp of cornflour mixed in 1 tsp of cold water; bring the sauce to the boil for a few seconds which will ensure that the sauce does not split – not chef-y but safe!)

Add 2 tbs of cream which will emulsify the butter.

Strain it through a sieve, pushing it through to extract all the flavour from the shallot and herbs. Return to the washed out pan.

Chop half the grapes into small pieces and cut the rest into halves and keep to one side. Add the chopped grapes and half the tarragon leaves into the warm sauce, cover and allow the flavours to develop.

To serve

Heat a frying pan, add a tsp of oil and pan fry the breasts and rolled breast for about 10 minutes, until the skin is golden brown and cooked through. Quickly brown the leg bon bons for a few minutes until warmed through. Leave to rest in a warm place. Cut the rolled breast into slices or in half.

Warm the sauce and add in a teaspoon of your chosen wine to taste. Whisk in small chunks (1cm) of chilled butter. The amount of butter depends on how much sauce you want - 100g is adequate for 6 people.

Lay out 2 breasts, 3 legs and a rolled breast per person along the plate. Serve on a bed of fresh watercress or wilted spinach.

Dress the plate with the sauce and sprinkle some tarragon leaves and grapes around the plate. Serve with fondant or Boulangere potatoes.

How to butterfly Quail – an additional technique

After removing the wings take a meat shear and cut all along the left side of the backbone. Do the same to the other side of the backbone and remove backbone from the carcass. Grab the quail with one breast in each hand and gently open it like a book, exposing the cavity of the bird. The breast bones should crack a bit and use a paring knife to cut down either side of it then remove.