



Coq au Vin

From Julia Child's Kitchen | Alfred A. Knopf, 1979

From the 1960s TV show “[The French Chef](#)” came many classic dishes. [Julia Child](#) made good on Herbert Hoover’s promise of a “chicken in every pot” by translating the wildly popular French take on coq au vin into the simple dish that it is, made with mushrooms, onions, bacon, red wine, and (natch) chicken. Since then, it has been recreated in millions of kitchens.

Many of the versions of this dish floating around when Madame Child was learning to cook in Paris were based on ancient recipes that called for a rooster or cock (coq) well past his crowing days. A rooster who’s no longer cock of the walk has flesh that’s incredibly flavorful and sufficiently sturdy to stand up to the frying, simmering, and yet more simmering required by this fricassée. In addition, the cockscomb, feet, head, and kidneys were tossed in for good measure. Blood was also added to the pot for a little thickening power and that oh-so-*français* touch, which put the dish over the top.

Julia knew (actually, I’m assuming things here, but I like the intimate familiarity and the ring of “Julia knew”) that getting an old rooster and a cup o’ blood ain’t exactly easy. So she tried to squeeze as much flavor as possible into this recipe, published [Mastering the Art of French Cooking](#), as well as the rendition published in the redux years later. She smartly calls for brown chicken stock, which is a homemade stock made more robust in taste and color by first searing the chicken pieces before simmering them. It’s a simple and easy way of adding extra depth and complexity. Considering you’ll be sitting down to a rooster-less, bloodless coq au vin, it’s still be pretty darn tasty.—**Julia Child**

LC Speaking French Note

We’re pretty certain that the doyenne of all things French, the inimitable Julia Child, penned this recipe when she was especially conscious of the need to translate fussy French cooking sensibilities to the American masses in need of manageable cooking techniques. As such, a couple common, though not compulsory, flavor-making steps were omitted in the making of this French classic. Consider incorporating them back into your coq au vin routine to ensure your stew is imbued with layer after layer of complexity. First, uncork that bottle of red and douse the bird, allowing it to take an overnight soak in the fridge to infuse the meat with a subtle but certain depth of flavor—not to mention a slightly freakish maroon hue. Drain the chicken then pat it dry and continue with the searing, reserving the wine for cooking. Another easy trick? For what we think are obvious reasons, sauté those teensy pearl onions in the rendered bacon drippings prior to adding them to the stew. Same goes with the ‘shrooms. And never, ever serve the stew straightaway from the stovetop; rather, let it cool and refrigerate ’till the next day, skimming any fat from the surface and heating the coq au vin gently—and we do mean gently—over low heat until warmed through. And you thought you didn’t know how to speak French.

COQ AU VIN RECIPE

Quick Glance	30 M	1 H	Serves 4 to 6
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INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup lardons (or very thick-cut bacon), cut into 1/4- by 1 1/2-inch strips (optional)
2 or more tablespoons olive oil
3 1/2 to 4 1/2 pounds chicken, cut into parts (or all of one kind of part), thoroughly dried
1/4 cup Cognac or Armagnac
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 bay leaf
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
20 small white onions, peeled
3 tablespoons flour
2 cups red wine, preferably Burgundy, Côtes du Rhône, or Pinot Noir
About 2 cups brown **homemade chicken stock**, or beef stock
1 or 2 garlic cloves, mashed or minced
About 1 tablespoon **tomato paste**
3/4 pound fresh mushrooms, trimmed, washed, and quartered

DIRECTIONS

1. **To make the Coq Au Vin in your slow cooker**, see the Slow Cooker Variation below.

To make the Coq Au Vin on your stovetop, if you're using lardons or bacon, sauté them in 2 tablespoons oil in a heavy-bottomed casserole until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Transfer the pork to a side dish, leaving the drippings in the pan. (Otherwise, coat the casserole with 1/8 inch of olive oil.)

2. Heat the drippings or oil in the pan over medium-high heat. Add the chicken, before careful not to crowd the pan. (You may need to work in batches). Cook the chicken, turning frequently, until nicely browned on all sides. Carefully pour the Cognac or Armagnac into the pan, let it become bubbling hot, and then, if desired—and if you're brave—ignite the sauce with a match. Let it flame for a minute, tilting the pan by its handle and swirling the sauce to burn off alcohol. To extinguish the flames, simply cover the pan with its lid.

3. Season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper. Add the bay leaf and thyme to the pan and place the onions around the chicken. Cover and simmer gently, turning the chicken once, for about 10 minutes.

4. Uncover the pan, sprinkle the flour over everything, and turn the chicken and onions so the flour is absorbed by the sauce. Cover and cook, turning once or twice, for 3 to 4 minutes more.

5. Remove the pan from the heat and gradually stir and swirl in the wine and enough stock or bouillon to almost cover the chicken. Add the lardons or bacon, garlic, tomato paste, and mushrooms to the pan, cover, and gently simmer for 25 to 30 minutes. Test the chicken for doneness (there should be no trace of pink and the juices should run clear when the meat is pierced with a knife) and remove those pieces that are ready. Continue to cook the rest of the chicken a few minutes longer. If the onions are not quite tender, continue cooking them in the sauce, then return the chicken to the pan, add the mushrooms, and simmer 4 to 5 minutes. The sauce should be just thick enough to lightly coat the chicken and vegetables. If it is too thin, boil it down rapidly to concentrate; if it is too thick, thin it with spoonfuls of stock or bouillon. Taste the sauce carefully, and correct the seasoning accordingly. Serve immediately or let cool, cover, and refrigerate overnight. To reheat, skim any fat that has congealed on the surface of the stew and place the pan of coq au vin over medium-low heat.

SLOW COOKER VARIATION

Understand that the complexity of this French classic relies in large part on the caramelization that comes from searing or sautéing various ingredients in a hot skillet prior to jumbling them all together to simmer. Making coq au vin still turns out a lovely and still worthwhile stew, albeit one with just slightly less depth of flavor. There are almost as many ways to adapt this recipe for the slow cooker as there are cooks and slow cookers. We opted for the following approach, which worked swell. If using the lardons (or bacon), follow step 1. of the instructions above. Place the lardons (or bacon) and their drippings in the slow cooker and add the remaining ingredients except for the oil and the flour and using only 1 cup stock (and not 2 cups as instructed above). Cook on medium heat for 5 1/2 to 6 hours, until the chicken is tender. Transfer the chicken to a platter or a serving dish. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium-high heat, stir in the flour, and cook until it forms a paste and just begins to turn brown at the edges. Stirring constantly, very slowly strain the liquid from the slow cooker into the saucepan and simmer until it has reduced to a consistency that's thick enough to coat the back of the spoon. Transfer the onions to the platter or dish with the chickens and discard the bay leaf. Pour the reduced sauce over the chicken and onions.

[Editor's Note: Bear in mind, no two slow-cookers are exactly alike, just as no two cooks are exactly alike. This slow-cooker approach worked really, really well for us, although if you have a different slow-cooker cooking technique you want to try by all means, do so. And, natch, we'd love if you'd share it with us in a comment below.]

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