



# Cheers TO COQ AU CHAMPAGNE



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Many of us likely toasted 2021 with a flute of champagne, Prosecco, or another bubbly. As Winston Churchill said, "First things first. Get the champagne."

I could not agree more. In fact, when you cook with bubbly, an ordinary day can feel like New Year's Eve. With that in mind, my first recipe of 2021 is Coq Au Champagne.

You are likely familiar with its brother dish, Coq Au Vin. While this classic French stew is usually made with a red Burgundy wine, for a festive flair, I recommend substituting your favorite sparkling. Previously, I wrote about one of my favorite sparklings, Gruet Brut Rosé. This 100 percent Pinor Noir crafted in Albuquerque, New Mexico, possesses floral and berry aromas ideal for lightening up a hearty winter meal.



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## COQ AU CHAMPAGNE

### Ingredients:

- 8 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs (or 4 legs with thigh and drumstick)
- Sea salt
- Fresh ground pepper
- 1 bottle Gruet Brut Rosé (or your sparkling of choice)
- 3 cups chicken stock
- Olive oil
- ¾ cup diced pancetta
- 6 carrots, cleaned and cut on the bias into 1-inch pieces (preferably an assortment of tricolored carrots)
- 3 large cippolini onions, peeled and quartered
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- Fresh thyme
- Fresh rosemary
- Salted butter
- 1 pound Baby Bella mushrooms, cleaned, halved
- Flour for thickening

Season the chicken with salt and pepper and place in a large bowl. Pour 2 cups of Gruet and 1 cup of chicken stock atop the chicken pieces. Marinate in the refrigerator for several hours. This is an important step in deepening the poultry's flavor.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Remove the chicken from the marinade and pat it dry. Reserve the marinade. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Brown the chicken in batches, several minutes per side. Transfer to a plate.

Add the pancetta to the pot and cook until lightly browned and slightly crisp. Add the carrots and cippolini, cooking until the onion is translucent. Add the tomato paste and stir in 2 cups of chicken stock. Simmer for a few minutes to thicken slightly. Then, add the marinade. Boil until the liquid is reduced by about one quarter. Place the chicken back in the pot and nestle in several sprigs of thyme and rosemary. Add another splash of sparkling if it appears you need more liquid to cover the chicken. Bring to a boil, then cover and transfer to the oven. While the chicken cooks for 1 hour, enjoy the remaining Gruet as you continue your prep work or play a game of Scrabble.

About 5 minutes before the chicken is cooked, heat two tablespoons of butter in a non-stick sauté pan. Add the Baby Bellas and sauté, moving around with a wooden spoon, until slightly browned.

Remove the pot from the oven. Transfer the chicken to a warm plate and cover with aluminum foil. The chicken will be very tender. Place the pot of sauce and vegetables over medium heat and reduce by about a quarter. Also, stir about 3 tablespoons of flour into ¼ cup of water. Add this to the sauce, stir, and continue to simmer until the sauce thickens to your desired consistency.

Return the chicken to the sauce and stir in the mushrooms. Simmer for another few minutes.

Serve with ricotta gnocchi or polenta. Even better, let crusty bread be your starch. I like to pair with a Roussillon white or red or — let's not lose sight of the theme here — something that sparkles. 🍾