

POUSSINS WITH BEER, MAPLE SYRUP, AND BALSAMIC GLAZE

Galletto o Pollo Glassato alla Birra e Balsamico

This is a recipe I created for a James Beard Foundation competition in 1995. My future wife, Shelly Burgess, a friend of Lidia's daughter, Tanya, and the coproducer of Lidia's TV show, was the one who insisted that I enter. Using some of the money from the grand prize, I took Shelly out to dinner; one wedding and three kids later, the rest is history. A poussin is a young chicken, less than a month old, usually weighing about a pound. It is also called "spring chicken."

— Chef Nicotra

SERVES 4 TO 6

1 cup dark beer

½ cup balsamic vinegar

¼ cup maple syrup

4 poussins (or two 2½-pound small chickens), halved

Kosher salt

Freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 medium onions, cut into chunks

5 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled

3 fresh bay leaves

4 cups chicken stock

1 pint black figs, halved

Combine the beer, vinegar, and maple syrup in a large measuring cup. Season the poussins with salt and pepper.

Heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the onions and garlic, and cook until browned and wilted, about 5 minutes more. Add the bay leaves, stock, and about a

quarter of the beer syrup. Bring to a simmer, and cook until very dark and flavorful and reduced by about half, about 1 hour. Strain and defat.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Wash and dry the Dutch oven. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in the Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the poussins and brown all over, about 5 minutes. Put them on a rimmed baking sheet as they brown. Place them in the oven, and roast until they're crisp and tender and a thermometer inserted into the thigh reads 165 degrees, about 30 to 35 minutes (tent with foil if the skin is getting too brown).

While the poussins finish, brown the figs in the oil left in the pot, 1 to 2 minutes, and remove them to a plate. Add the strained stock and remaining beer syrup to the Dutch oven, and boil over high heat to make a thin glaze, about 8 to 10 minutes. When the poussins are done, add to the Dutch oven with the figs, just to coat everything quickly in the sauce. Serve on a platter, with extra sauce on the side.

