

Roast Tarragon Chicken with Leeks, Pears and Potatoes

Adapted from "Roasting" by Kathy Gunst

Kathy's Note: I am often asked how I come up with a recipe. Sometimes a recipe is developed in a methodical fashion—I start out to create the best roast tarragon chicken—but other times it happens haphazardly. This wonderful chicken happened by chance. In this case, I had just arrived at a friend's house in the south of France. I had bought a chicken from the local boucherie, or butcher's shop, there were fresh pears from a neighbor's tree, a few leeks, potatoes and garlic from the market. The tarragon was snipped from the 3 foot-high bush growing outside the door, and the bay leaves picked from a neighbor's tree. I never would have come up with this dish at home, but sometimes an unlikely combination of ingredients leads to memorable results. This is one of my favorite chicken recipes.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 leeks, trimmed, and cut lengthwise and then into 3-inch pieces
One 3 to 4 pound chicken
3 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon
1 tablespoon chopped garlic, and 4 cloves whole, peeled garlic
2 bay leaves
4 medium potatoes, peeled and cut in quarters
2 large ripe pears, cored and cut lengthwise into quarters
2 shallots, peeled and cut into thick pieces
1 large head fennel, fronds trimmed and saved and bulb cut into quarters
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
About 1 cup white wine

Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Grease the bottom of a large roasting pan with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Arrange the leeks in the middle (center) of the roasting pan. Place the chicken, breast side up, on top of the leeks. Place 1 tablespoon of the tarragon, the chopped garlic, bay leaves, and salt and pepper in the cavity of the bird. Surround the chicken with the potatoes, pears, whole garlic cloves, shallots and fennel bulb wedges. Drizzle the chicken and vegetables and fruit with the remaining oil and season everything with salt and pepper.

Place the chicken on the middle shelf and roast 30 minutes. Add the wine and continue roasting for another 30 minutes or until the chicken is done when the juices run clear and not pink when the inside of the thigh is pierced. Baste the bird once or twice, stirring the vegetables.

Remove from the oven and let sit before carving. Serve the chicken warm with the pears, potatoes, fennel, and garlic and any juices from the bottom of the pan.

Serves 4