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Introduction

Philippe Delacourcelle

What led a young French cook with traditional training to dust our culinary classics with spices and exotic aromas to give them refined and original accents? I know that what I did is not at all common in the world of chefs. I am not aiming to overthrow tradition in the kitchen but to change the angle of vision, to aim our sights in a different direction. For each recipe I have tried to heighten a dish in our repertoire or a classic ingredient in our markets by unexpected means, to give a new tonality to a dish that we thought we knew. I love to reproduce, in a dish, by precise amounts, the particular charm that the spices have for me. In my travels, from the lessons I have learned from enchanting tastes I met along the way, I have drawn the quintessence; the spices have taught me a language that I have applied, with passion, to my work—by finding the right ingredient, the right quantity, the right moment. I had classic training as a cook and a pastry cook. Later I worked as pastry chef at Fauchon's, then as a chef in various gourmet restaurants, and especially at the restaurant of Bernard Loiseau in Saulieu, where I was the second chef. I have always been attracted by foreign cuisines, particularly those of Southeast Asia. In restaurant kitchens I worked alongside Japanese cooks who loved good food and refinement of taste. In 1979 I undertook a long trip out of France to study the cuisines of eastern Asia. For five years I traveled around these regions, beginning in Japan, where I met friends who were pleased to guide me in my gastronomic quest. Next it was in Malaysia and Singapore, which remain somewhat my favorites because of their culinary richness and their love of life. After that I went to Indonesia, to Thailand, to Hong Kong, to Korea, and more recently to China. Naturally, when I came back to France I tried to reproduce the magic flavors that I found during my travels.

Since 1984, the year I opened my restaurant Le Clos Morillons in the 15th arrondissement of Paris, I have continued this research. The success of my blends of spices encouraged me to write simple recipes, based on ordinary ingredients, that could be used by gourmets who are not necessarily experts in the culinary arts.

In my approach, I do not try to imitate oriental cuisines or to make French dishes unrecognizable; instead, I add ingredients and tricks from overseas to the base of our culinary tradition in order to create a new feeling, a new accent. It is a fascinating game that heightens and lightens the flavors, accentuating their poetry and their potential to make us dream. Depending on the way I use it, the spice accompanies the dish in different ways: sometimes deep, subtle aromas are created by long cooking; at other times, fireworks of flavors, added at the last minute, burst forth in a surprising fashion. Often adding a spice to a simple preparation (apple tart, vinaigrette, lamb stew) introduces an unexpected note, but the basic product, the theme of the dish, is always present and intact. In the recipes that follow, only the spices bring an exotic touch. The technique is indeed French, and the basic products can be found regularly in our shops, markets, and supermarkets. Similarly, most of the spices are not difficult to find. Pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon, clove, curry, cumin, caraway, vanilla, saffron, and allspice are found everywhere. Ginger, star anise, cardamom, coriander, turmeric, and anise are only slightly less common. As for lemongrass, lime leaves, long pepper, Maniguette pepper, Szechuan pepper, tonka bean, garam masala, and other mixtures of spices, most can be found in Asian supermarkets, which are more and more common in France. In addition, I often give possible substitutions of flavor in case you cannot find the spices I initially suggest.

How to accompany these dishes? A commonplace idea is that spices are difficult to match with wines. It's not so simple! The Chinese have always appreciated grape wines of central Asia in their aromatic cuisine. It is pointless to make do with beer or the eternal rosé de Provence. Red or white? What matters is that the bouquet of the wine completes the accents of the spices, is complementary to them without necessarily resembling them. The flavors should be com-

plex, and wine, especially white wine, should have a robust, honeyed, aromatic base. Mellow wine, not too sweet or coarse, is always welcome. It should have character in order to play its part in the spicy symphony. Among the Loire valley wines (which I particularly like because of my origins), I like the Vouvrays, the Savennières, the Anjou whites; Alsatian wines (Gewürztraminer, of course, but also Tokay, Riesling, etc.) are valuable, as are the wines of the southwest, of the lower Rhone valley, and of the south, often in perfect harmony with the spicy flavors. The Chardonnay variety, as long as it is not too woody, and the marvelous Viognier variety, from the Rhone and the south, can produce intense and magic marriages of flavors. I invite you to discover this cooking touched with spices: the trip will not take you far from your familiar base, but you will make many surprising discoveries.

1 Terrines

- 2 Terrine of rabbit, eggplant, and fenugreek
- 4 Terrine of lentils, preserved duck gizzards, and ras el-hanout
- 6 Terrine of duck and green peppercorns
- 7 Calf's head with Chinese spices
- 9 Terrine of green peas and sumac
- 11 Terrine of chicken, sorrel, and Moroccan spices

Terrine of rabbit, eggplant, and fenugreek**Terrine de lapin à l'aubergine, et au fenugrec**

SERVES 8 TO 10

PREPARATION: 1 hour

COOKING: 1 hour 15 minutes

REFRIGERATION: 12 hours

- 1 rabbit
- 1 pound (400 grams) streaky smoked bacon, without rind, sliced thin
- 3 eggplants
- 1 tablespoon fenugreek seeds (or mustard seeds)
- Fine salt, freshly ground white pepper, fleur de sel

Debone the rabbit.

Heat the oven to 350°F (180°C).

Line a terrine dish 12 inches (25 cm) long and 4 inches (8 cm) tall with the bacon slices. The bacon slices should be higher than the dish so they can be folded over the rabbit.

With a serrated knife, cut the eggplants lengthwise in ½-inch (1 cm) slices. Then cut in half so they fit the terrine dish.

In a small pan, boil a little water with the fenugreek seeds for a minute and let them cool in the water.

Place a layer of raw eggplant in the bottom of the terrine dish, and season with fine salt and pepper. Spread on this layer half of the rabbit, seasoned with half of the fenugreek. Cover with another layer of eggplant, then the rest of the rabbit and the fenugreek. Finish with a last layer of eggplant, and cover the terrine by folding down the bacon slices.

Cook the terrine in a bain-marie in the oven for 1 hour 15 minutes. Remove from the oven and add a weight covered with

aluminum foil. Let it cool for 2 hours, then refrigerate, with the weight in place, for 12 hours.

To unmold hold the terrine slightly tilted under hot water for 30 seconds. Then turn out on a plate and add fleur de sel and pepper.

CHEF'S COMMENTS: Fenugreek is normally used with vegetables. In this recipe it adds an original, surprising touch of licorice.

Chicken or another fowl might be substituted for rabbit.— **TRANS.**

BAIN-MARIE: A bain-marie is a pan of hot water into which you put terrine molds, dessert molds, etc. and then bake them in the oven surrounded by the hot water.

Terrine of lentils, preserved duck gizzards, and ras el-hanout

Terrine de lentilles et gésiers confits au ras el-hanout

SERVES 6 TO 8

PREPARATION: 15 minutes

COOKING: 20 minutes

REFRIGERATION: about 8 hours

- 12-ounce (350 g) can of preserved duck gizzards
- ½ pound (200 g) green Puy lentils, rinsed and drained
- ½ onion
- ½ carrot
- ½ stalk of celery
- 1 sprig thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 tablespoon ras el-hanout (or curry)
- 1 cup (25 cl) of whipping (heavy) cream
- 2½ envelopes unflavored gelatin
(equivalent to 17 g, 12 leaves of gelatin)
- Salt, freshly ground pepper

Drain the gizzards, keeping the fat. Peel, wash, and coarsely chop the vegetables. In a pan, brown the vegetables over low heat for 1 minute in a bit of duck fat. Add the lentils, thyme, and bay leaf and moisten with 4 cups (1 liter) water. Cook for 20 minutes over low heat. Remove the vegetables. Drain the lentils in a sieve and refrigerate.

Soak the gelatin in cold water. Heat ½ teaspoon duck fat with the ras el-hanout for 15 seconds, add the cream, and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat and incorporate the drained gelatin with a whisk. Let it cool.

In a bowl, mix the cold lentils, the gizzards, and the cold cream. Add salt and pepper. Line the interior of a terrine dish with aluminum foil or plastic wrap, then add the mixture and refrigerate for about 8 hours.

Unmold the terrine, cut it in very thin slices, and arrange these in a fan shape on a dish. You can accompany this terrine with a spicy condiment or chutney.

CHEF'S COMMENTS: In this mixture of flavors, the ras el-hanout brings France to the gates of Morocco.

Duck gizzards are less common in the United States than in France. If you cannot find a can of duck gizzards, try this recipe with dark meat of duck.—**TRANS.**

Terrine of duck and green peppercorns**Terrine de canard au poivre vert**

SERVES 6

PREPARATION: 30 minutes

COOKING: 1 hour

REFRIGERATION: 12 hours

- 6 deboned duck legs
- 1 egg
- 6 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon green peppercorns
- Salt, freshly ground white pepper

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).

Put the duck meat through a meat grinder or food processor, without removing the skin or fat. Add the egg and the seasonings, and mix with a wooden spatula. Taste and adjust the seasoning (but don't eat the raw duck!). Put the mixture in a mold or terrine dish, and cover the surface with bay leaves. Cook in a bain-marie for 1 hour. Remove from the oven and cover with a weight, pressing down for a few seconds. Let it cool for 2 hours, then refrigerate overnight, still covered with the weight.

Serve the next day in its mold. You can accompany the terrine with a sweet aubergine chutney, for example, or cut it in thin slices arranged on a bed of salad dressed with walnut oil.

CHEF'S COMMENTS: This is a terrine of surprising simplicity, with a spicy taste of duck and green pepper. It is classic but delicious.

Too often in France, terrines are bound together with pork or veal.—

TRANS.