

Food for Thought

by Leslie Barnes

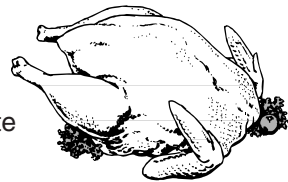
Creating delicious food for your family and friends doesn't have to be difficult with impossible to find ingredients. Knowledge is power in the kitchen. Understanding what the caper will add to the dish will allow you to substitute another ingredient similar in flavor or eliminate it all together. The recipe is only a suggestion, you choose where you want the flavors to go. This is the fun part of cooking. Enjoy.



"What are capers?" They are the preserved flower buds of a shrub or bush that originated in the Mediterranean area. They are named for the bush, *Capparis spinosa* L. After the buds are picked, they're pickled in either a vinegar brine or simple salt. The pickling process leads to the development of a mild (but distinctive) mustard-like flavor, in fact, I've used a pinch of dried mustard as a substitute for capers in a sauce. Brined capers also contribute a tart, vinegary slightly-salty flavor, while salted capers add a good dose of salt to a dish – even when rinsed.

CHICKEN CACCIATORE

1 whole chicken cut up 2 tsp salt, plus more to taste
 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
 1/2 cup all purpose flour, for dredging
 (I add about an 1/8 tsp of cayenne pepper to the flour)
 3 T olive oil 1 large red bell pepper, chopped
 1 onion, chopped 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 3/4 cup dry white wine 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes with juice
 3/4 cup chicken broth 1 tsp drained capers
 1-1/2 tps dried oregano leaves
 1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh basil leaves



Sprinkle the chicken pieces with 1 tsp of each salt and pepper. Dredge the chicken pieces in the flour to coat lightly.

In a large heavy sauté pan, heat the oil over a medium-high flame. Add the chicken pieces to the pan and sauté just until brown, about 5 minutes per side. If all the chicken does not fit in the pan, sauté it in 2 batches. Transfer the chicken to a plate and set aside. Add the bell pepper, onion and garlic to the same pan and sauté over medium heat until the onion is tender, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the wine and simmer until reduced by half, about 3 minutes. Add the tomatoes with their juice, broth, capers and oregano. Return the chicken pieces to the pan and turn them to coat in the sauce. Bring the sauce to a simmer. Continue simmering over medium-low heat until the chicken is just cooked through, about 30 minutes for the breast pieces, and 20 minutes for the thighs.

Using tongs, transfer the chicken to a platter. If necessary, boil the sauce until it thickens slightly, about 3 minutes. Spoon off any excess fat from atop the sauce. Spoon the sauce over the chicken, then sprinkle with the basil and serve.

Equal parts chicken broth can be substituted for the white wine. Serves 4-6.

HERBED CHICKEN WITH VEGETABLES

1/4 cup chopped fresh thyme leaves, or 1 T dried thyme leaves
 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley leaves or 1 T dried parsley leaves
 3 cloves garlic, minced 1 tsp fennel seeds
 1/4 tsp red pepper flakes Kosher salt
 Freshly ground black pepper 1 whole chicken, cut up
 3 T olive oil 1 T butter
 1 large onion, peeled and quartered
 4 to 6 carrots, peeled and trimmed
 1 cup chicken broth 6 oz snap peas, trimmed
 4 oz button mushrooms

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

In a small bowl combine the thyme, parsley, garlic, fennel seeds, red pepper flakes, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Place the chicken pieces on a work surface. Gently loosen the skin of the chicken and push the herb mixture under the skin. Season the chicken all over with salt and pepper.

An alternative method: In a large bowl combine the thyme, parsley, garlic, fennel seeds, red pepper flakes, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Place the chicken pieces in the bowl and cover with mixture. Let marinate for 30 minutes or over night

in the fridge.

Warm the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Place the chicken in the pan, skin side down, when the oil is hot. Cook until the skin is crispy and golden, about 5 minutes. Turn the chicken and cook the same way on the other side. Turn the heat off the pan and reserve. Transfer the chicken to a baking dish, skin side up, and finish cooking in the oven, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile return the same pan to medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon of the butter. When the butter has melted, add the onions and carrots. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cook until tender and golden in places, about 7 minutes. *See below. Add the chicken broth and scrape any brown bits off the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon. Add the snap peas and mushrooms. Simmer over low heat until the vegetables are tender and the liquid has reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, if necessary.

Remove the chicken from the oven. Spoon the vegetables onto a serving platter along with the chicken. Spoon the sauce over the chicken. Serve immediately.

* For an added layer of flavor, add 1/2 cup dry white wine with the chicken broth. Serves 4-6.

PORK CHOPS WITH DIJON SAUCE

1 T butter 1 T olive oil
 4 center-cut rib or loin pork chops, bone in (preferred), about 1-1/4 inch thick
 Salt Freshly ground black pepper
 1/4 cup chopped green onions or shallots
 1/2 cup dry white wine 3/4 cup chicken stock
 1/2 cup heavy cream 1 T Dijon mustard
 1 T chopped parsley (optional)

Melt the butter in the oil in a large deep skillet over medium high heat. Season chops with salt and pepper and brown them, about 2-3 minutes on each side. Reduce heat slightly if the chops brown too quickly.

Remove chops from the pan and pour off most of the fat. Add the green onions or shallots and cook on med. high heat until softened, about 1 minute. Add wine and bring to a boil, scraping the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the stock and return chops to the pan. Bring sauce to a simmer and cook until chops are tender, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Remove the chops to a warm platter; cover with foil to keep warm. Raise the temp of the pan to boil the pan juices, reduce the juices by half, about 2 minutes. Add cream and boil 2 minutes more, until sauce reduces and thickens. Remove from the heat and whisk in mustard and parsley. If you want, add more mustard to taste. Spoon sauce over chops and serve. Serves 4.

Church Directory

NEHALEM VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH

Gary Taylor, Pastor
 Grant & North Streets, Vernonia
 503 429-5378
 Sunday School 10:00 a.m.
 Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.
 Nursery available
 Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

VERNONIA FOURSQUARE CHURCH

Carl Pense, Pastor
 850 Madison Avenue, Vernonia
 503 429-1103
 Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.
 Children's Sunday School

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

Marc Farmer, Branch President
 1350 E. Knott Street, Vernonia
 503 429-7151
 Sacrament Meeting, Sunday 10 a.m.
 Sunday School & Primary 11:20 a.m.
 Relief Society, Priesthood and
 Young Women, Sunday 12:10 p.m.

SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST

Gary S. Walter, Pastor
 2nd Ave. and Nehalem St., Vernonia
 503 429-8301
 Morning Worship, 11:00 a.m.
 Sabbath School 9:30 a.m.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD

Wayne and Maureen Marr
 662 Jefferson Ave., Vernonia,
 503 429-0373
 Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
 Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.

VERNONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sam Hough, Minister
 410 North Street, Vernonia
 503 429-6522
 Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
 Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.
 (meets in Youth & Family Center)
 Home Group Meeting
 throughout the week
 at various locations

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

359 "A" Street, Vernonia
 503 429-4027
 Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
 Sunday Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
 Wednesday Prayer Meeting 7:00 p.m.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Rev. Luan Tran, Administrator
 960 Missouri Avenue, Vernonia
 503 429-8841
 Mass Sunday 12:00 Noon
 Religious Educ. Sunday 10:30 a.m.

VERNONIA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grant Williams, Pastor
 957 State Avenue, Vernonia
 503 429-6790
 Sunday Breakfast 9:00 a.m.
 Morning Worship 9:45 a.m.
 Children and Nursery 10:00 a.m.
 Youth Group 6:00 p.m.
 Preschool Mon. & Wed. 9:00 a.m.
 Wednesday Prayer 6:00 p.m.
 Tues. & Fri. Adult Volleyball 7:00 p.m.