

NH THE LORD CHARLES

Chef Paul Bain's recipe of the month – **Pâté à la maison**

Here's little French inspiration to start the new year. I know it sounds very fancy, but it's not – it's just a fancy French term for "homemade pâté". You will of course need the finest ingredients your wallet will allow you, and it might seem a little complicated, but it's well worth it!

You will need:

- • Butter
- • 2 onions, finely chopped
- • 4 cloves garlic, minced
- • 2 bay leaves
- • 4 sprigs of thyme
- • 1 sprig of rosemary
- • A small handful of parsley
- • 40g chopped bacon
- • ½ cup red wine
- • ½ cup white wine
- • ¼ cup sherry or port
- • 650g boneless, skinless chicken breast
- • 50g chicken livers
- • 60g dried mushrooms
- • 4 egg yolks



First of all, lightly fry the onions, garlic, bay leaves, thyme, rosemary, parsley and bacon in a little butter to a nice dark golden brown colour; then add the red and white wine and sherry or port. Bring the mixture to the boil, and reduce the volume by a third. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. Pick out any herb stems that may be left.

Meanwhile, soak the mushrooms in enough hot water to just cover them and leave for about 15 minutes or so. (You can also use fresh mushrooms, but they just don't have enough flavour.) Strain the mushrooms and add about 3 tablespoons of the "mushroom water" to the cooling pan juices, then roughly chop the mushrooms.

Put the chicken breasts and livers in a food processor, and mince the meat using the pulse setting. As the machine is whirling around, slowly add the reduced mixture in the pan, including all the onions and herbs. (Cooked food that is going to be served cold always needs to be a little over seasoned.) At this stage, add some salt and pepper, and the chopped mushrooms. If you're brave enough, you can have a taste of the raw meat mixture now to check the seasoning; if not, put a teaspoon of the mix into a hot frying pan, cook and then taste. It's best to add seasoning gradually – you can't remove it once you've added it, but you can always add some more if needed.

When you are happy with your seasoned mix, you can add any other ingredients that you think will complement the flavour: end pieces of Parma ham, smoked chicken, salami, peppercorns, etc. Chop these up and add to the mix, along with the egg yolks, and mix really well with your clean hand.

Now you need a loaf tin and a deep baking tray or dish. Brush some vegetable oil on the inside of the loaf tin, then line it with plastic wrap. The plastic will stick to the oil. Try not to overlap the plastic wrap, or it may cause leaks or creases in the final product. Pour the mix into the lined tin – you can go ahead and fill it right to the top. Now wrap the whole tin in plastic – it must be completely covered. Put it in the baking tray, and fill the tray up with cold water, about 1/3 up the side of the loaf tin. Bake slowly in the oven at about 140°C for an hour or so.

Test to see if it's cooked by inserting a toothpick in the middle, holding it there for 30 seconds, and then putting it to your lips – if you're inclined to say ouch!, it's cooked. Take out of the oven, remove the loaf tin from the hot water and leave to cool down.

Leave the pâté to rest for 2 to 3 days in the fridge before serving. Then simply turn it out of the tin, and slice. It's great with crusty bread and some nice pickling onions cooked in balsamic vinegar and sugar.

Bon appétit!