

Julia Child's casserole-roasted chicken

'Julia Child's *poulet poêle à l'estragon* says as much about the Gallic way of life as it does the art of haute cuisine'

Elisabeth Luard

Casserole-roasted chicken (*poulet poêle à l'estragon*)

Extract from Julia Child's **Mastering the Art of French Cooking** (with Louisette Bertholle and Simone Beck)
Published by Penguin Books 2009 (first published in 1963)

Serves 4 people
Estimated roasting time: 1 hour and 10–20 minutes for a 3lb bird
Preheat oven to 160°C/325°F/
Gas Mark 2

Ingredients

A 3lb roasting chicken
¾tsp salt
Pinch of pepper
3½oz butter
6 or 8 sprigs of fresh tarragon
or ½tsp of dried tarragon
½tbsp oil, more if needed
1 medium sliced onion
1 small sliced carrot
A fireproof casserole large enough to hold the chicken on its back and on its side, with a tight-fitting cover
A bulb baster
Aluminium foil

For the brown tarragon sauce

¾pt brown stock or beef *bouillon* and tinned chicken broth combined to make ¾pt
½oz cornflour blended with 1tbsp Madeira or port
2tbsp fresh chopped tarragon or parsley
½oz softened butter

To serve

10–12 fresh tarragon leaves blanched for 30 seconds in boiling water, rinsed in cold water and dried on absorbent paper



Season the cavity of the chicken with a quarter of a teaspoon of salt, the pepper and half an ounce of butter. Insert 3 or 4 sprigs of tarragon, or sprinkle in a quarter of a teaspoon of dried tarragon. Truss the chicken. Dry it thoroughly and rub the skin with half an ounce of butter.

Place the casserole over a moderately high heat with one ounce of butter and the oil. When the butter foam has begun to subside, lay in the chicken, breast down. Brown for 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the chicken on another side, being sure not to break its skin. Continue browning and turning the chicken until it is golden almost all over, particularly on the breast and legs. This will take 10–15 minutes. Add more oil if necessary to keep the bottom of the casserole filmed.

Remove the chicken. Pour out

Nothing beats the aroma of Julia Child's (*left*) roasted chicken

the browning fat if it has burned, and add one-and-a-half ounces of fresh butter.

Cook the carrots and onions in the casserole for 5 minutes without browning. Add a quarter of a teaspoon of salt and the remaining tarragon.

Salt the chicken, using a quarter of a teaspoon of salt. Set it breast up over the vegetables and baste it with the butter in the casserole. Lay a piece of aluminium foil over the chicken, cover the casserole, and reheat it on top of the stove until you hear the chicken sizzling. Then place the casserole on a rack in the middle of the preheated oven.

Roast for 1 hour and 10–20 minutes, regulating heat so that the chicken is always making quiet cooking noises. Baste once or twice with the butter and juices in the casserole. The chicken is done when its drumsticks move in their sockets, and when the last drops of juice drained from its vent run clear yellow. Remove the chicken to a serving dish and discard trussing strings.

To make the sauce, add the stock or *bouillon* and broth to the casserole and simmer for 2 minutes, scraping up coagulated

roasting juices. Skim off all but a tablespoon of fat. Blend in the cornflour mixture, simmer for a minute, then raise heat and boil rapidly until sauce is lightly thickened. Taste for seasoning, adding more tarragon if you feel it necessary. Strain into a warmed sauceboat. Stir in the herbs and butter.

To serve, pour a spoonful of sauce over the chicken, and decorate the breast and legs with tarragon leaves. The dish may be garnished with sprigs of fresh parsley or—if you are serving them—sautéed potatoes and grilled tomatoes. 🍴

Elisabeth Luard is the author of *Classic French Cooking*

And to drink...

Try the 2009 *Domaine des Trois Pierres, Costières de Nîmes, Rhône, France* (£6.69 or £4.99 until September 27 at Waitrose). It's unoaked and packed full of fresh berry flavours and red-liquorice spice.

Chosen by Amelia Pinsent

