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Chicken Ragout, Much Lighter Than a Stew

By Susie Iventosch



Pappardelle Pasta with Chicken Ragout

Photo Susie Iventosch

This is the time of year when the desire for comfort foods really starts to surface. That is probably why my son, who is a huge seafood fan, opted for pasta instead of lobster on his first-ever trip to Boston last week. He was so enthralled with the dish, that he sent an email to tell me all about this orecchiette pasta with hen ragout.

"Holy cow, it was amazing!!! I mean, really, really amazing!" he raved. And, then he went on to ask if I knew how to make a ragout. Well, the short answer is yes, but normally I think of tomatoes and veggies, along with some beef for a hearty, stew-like meal. This chicken ragout is lighter than a beef ragout, and calls for carrots, celery and onions, along with herbs, wine and chicken. It is delicious and perfect to serve over pasta. We chose pappardelle pasta, because it holds up so well to the pureed sauce and chunks of chicken.

INGREDIENTS

1 whole, fryer (or roaster) chicken, quartered into leg/thigh and breast/wing parts (remove skin if you prefer skinless)
Sea salt and fresh ground pepper
¼ cup olive oil, divided
2 carrots, cut into ½-inch pieces
2 stalks of celery, cut into ½-inch pieces
1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 sprigs of thyme, stripped of stem
2 sprigs of rosemary, stripped of stem and chopped
3 sage leaves, chopped
¼ cup parsley, chopped (reserve some for garnish)
¼ cup tomato paste
1 cup dry white wine (can use red wine)
1 ½ cups water
16 ounces pappardelle pasta
½ cup fresh-grated Parmesan

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 300F.

In a large skillet or Dutch oven, heat 2 tablespoons oil and brown chicken on both sides. Remove to a plate.

In the same pan, add a little more oil and cook onions, garlic, celery, carrots and herbs over medium heat, until beginning to brown and getting a little bit caramelized. Add tomato paste and mix until dissolved. Then add the wine and water and stir well, until integrated.

Place chicken back in pot, press down into broth and veggies and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Bake, covered, for approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until chicken is cooked tender and falling off the bone. Remove from oven and cool to room temperature.

Pull the meat from the bones into large and small pieces and discard bones and fat. Set chicken aside. Meanwhile, puree braising veggies along with all the broth that is left in a food processor. This may take several batches, depending on the size of the processor. Return pureed sauce to a pot or pan and season to taste with salt and pepper. Add meat and heat until warm. Serve over cooked pasta and garnish with fresh grated Parmesan and a sprig of parsley.

Susie Iventosch is the author of *Tax Bites* and *Tasty Morsels*, which can be found at *Across the Way* in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net.

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This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com.

If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Specialties of the House

The Hunt for Happy Hour – Home/Made Kitchen

By A.K. Carroll



Photos A.K. Carroll

This week's Hunt for Happy Hour takes us to Moraga's Home/Made Kitchen Café to see what's cooking with their newest afternoon offering.

Not everyone will venture off the beaten path or drive the extra distance to have a meal in Moraga, but those willing to wander to the door of Home/Made Kitchen will be greeted with a welcome that might just change their uphill aversion. A modest establishment housed in cinderblock walls with wide-open windows, the café's character comes from its creators' attention to detail – butcher paper table-cloths, dishes edged in flowers, tiny sugared cookies served alongside cups of coffee. It isn't elaborate by any means, but that is intentional. It is quaint, comfortable, homey and, well, "homemade," which isn't always a word you associate with happy hour.

Home/Made started as a daytime joint that served breakfast at all hours, poured quality coffee, and baked dainty and decadent pastries. The local community was insatiable, so the café expanded its offerings to take-away meals and prix fixe Friday dinners. Less than two miles from a college campus and nestled among the suburbs, happy hour was the logical next step in filling



out the café's offerings. You won't find crazy cocktails, truffle fries, or foie gras, but you will encounter generous portions and heart-felt food at a fraction of the price. It's like home. Only better.

Home/made's happy hour features chilled canned and bottled beers, including Lagunitas, Blue Moon and Caldera, all of which go for \$3-\$3.50. House red, white and sparkling wines are \$5 a glass, as are delicate peach bellinis made in the traditional style with a puree of fresh white peaches mixed with sparkling wine.

Beverages can be enjoyed indoors at a cozy café table or outdoors on the sunny stretch of patio.

Food offerings are simple, but generous, and include a chicken quesadilla made with sharp cheddar and jack cheeses, with pico de gallo and sour cream; barbecue pork sliders served on fluffy soft butter buns with red cabbage and housemade wasabi slaw; and crunchy housemade tortilla chips with edamame hummus or a side of guacamole. Options are likely to rotate according to season, reception, and culinary inspiration.

Though you could easily make a meal off of Home/Made's happy hour offerings, if it's a Friday evening and you're in need of a night out you might opt to stick around for the curated three-course prix fixe. Like all of the café's items, these dishes are made with quality ingredients from local markets and food purveyors – the sort of places you might buy from if you were shopping for your family, which is essentially how the owners view the mission of their meals. Hop on over for happy hour and get a taste of what makes Moraga a home away from home that's worth a little drive.



When:
4-6 pm, Thursday-Friday
Where:
Home/Made Kitchen Café & Bakery, 337 Rheem Blvd., Moraga
Drinks:
\$5 bellinis, \$5 house wines, \$3 beers
Food:
\$2-3 appetizers
Recommended:
White Peach Bellini and edamame hummus

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