

chicken chasseur recipe delia smith

Chicken Chasseur Recipe Delia Smith: A Comprehensive Guide

Chicken Chasseur recipe Delia Smith is a culinary classic that evokes images of hearty, comforting French farmhouse cooking. For many, Delia Smith's approach to this beloved dish represents the gold standard, a recipe that is both accessible to the home cook and delivers sophisticated, restaurant-quality results. This comprehensive guide delves deep into Delia Smith's iconic Chicken Chasseur recipe, exploring its origins, the meticulous steps involved in its preparation, and offering tips and variations to ensure your success. Whether you're a seasoned cook looking to perfect your Chasseur or a novice embarking on your first French culinary adventure, understanding Delia's methodology will unlock the secrets to a truly memorable meal. We'll cover everything from selecting the finest ingredients to achieving that perfect, rich sauce, making this your ultimate resource for mastering Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur.

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The Allure of Chicken Chasseur

Chicken Chasseur, often translated as "hunter's chicken," is a dish that whispers tales of forest foraging and rustic abundance. Its very name conjures images of a rich, flavourful stew, typically featuring chicken braised with mushrooms, tomatoes, and a generous splash of wine, often brandy or cognac. The beauty of Chicken Chasseur lies in its deceptive simplicity; while the ingredients are relatively humble, the combination and careful cooking technique elevate it to something truly special. It's a dish that warms the soul and satisfies the palate, making it a perennial favourite in kitchens around the world.

The essence of Chasseur is its aromatic base and the depth of flavour developed through slow

cooking. The mushrooms, often button or chestnut, absorb the rich juices, while the tomatoes provide a touch of acidity to balance the richness. The wine is crucial, not only for its flavour but also for tenderising the chicken and creating the luxurious sauce that is the hallmark of this dish. It's a testament to French culinary philosophy that simple, good quality ingredients, treated with respect and patience, can result in such a profoundly delicious meal.

Why Delia Smith's Recipe is a Classic

Delia Smith, a culinary icon in the UK, has a unique gift for demystifying complex cooking techniques and making them accessible to everyone. Her approach to Chicken Chasseur is no different. She breaks down the process into clear, manageable steps, ensuring that even those with limited cooking experience can achieve exceptional results. Her recipes are renowned for their reliability and the consistent deliciousness they deliver, building confidence in home cooks and fostering a love for traditional cooking.

What sets Delia's Chicken Chasseur apart is her meticulous attention to detail and her emphasis on flavour building. She doesn't shy away from techniques that enhance taste, such as browning the chicken properly to develop a rich fond and sautéing the aromatics to release their full potential. Her guidance on deglazing the pan with brandy, a step that adds an unparalleled depth of flavour, is a prime example of her expertise. Her recipes are not just instructions; they are a masterclass in understanding how ingredients interact and how to coax the best possible flavours from them.

Furthermore, Delia's recipes are often designed with the busy home cook in mind. While Chicken Chasseur is a dish that benefits from time, her method ensures that the active preparation time is manageable, allowing the dish to simmer and develop its flavours while you attend to other things. This balance between practicality and culinary excellence is a hallmark of her enduring appeal, making her Chicken Chasseur a go-to recipe for countless families and dinner parties.

Essential Ingredients for Delia's Chicken Chasseur

The foundation of any great Chicken Chasseur, particularly Delia's rendition, lies in the quality of its ingredients. Using fresh, good-quality produce will undoubtedly elevate the final dish. Here's a breakdown of the key components you'll need:

- **Chicken:** Delia often recommends using bone-in, skin-on chicken pieces, such as thighs and drumsticks. The bones add flavour to the sauce, and the skin, when browned, contributes to richness and texture.
- **Mushrooms:** Fresh button or chestnut mushrooms are traditional. Ensure they are clean and, depending on size, halved or quartered. Their earthy flavour is crucial to the Chasseur profile.
- **Onions:** Finely chopped onions form the aromatic base. Shallots can also be used for a slightly milder flavour.

- **Garlic:** Minced garlic adds pungency and depth.
- **Tomatoes:** Tinned chopped tomatoes are ideal for their consistent texture and flavour, contributing to the sauce's body and acidity.
- **White Wine:** A dry white wine, such as a Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Grigio, is essential for deglazing the pan and infusing the sauce with its characteristic tang.
- **Brandy or Cognac:** A small amount of brandy or cognac is typically flambéed or added to the sauce for an extra layer of complexity and warmth.
- **Chicken Stock:** Good quality chicken stock provides the liquid base for the sauce, adding further chicken flavour.
- **Herbs:** Fresh thyme and parsley are classic accompaniments. Thyme adds an earthy, herbaceous note, while parsley provides freshness as a garnish.
- **Flour:** A little flour is often used to lightly coat the chicken before browning, which helps to thicken the sauce.
- **Butter and Olive Oil:** A combination is often used for sautéing, providing both flavour and a good cooking temperature.
- **Salt and Black Pepper:** Essential for seasoning throughout the cooking process.

Step-by-Step Preparation: A Deep Dive into Delia's Method

Delia Smith's method for Chicken Chasseur is designed for maximum flavour extraction and ease of execution. She guides you through each stage with precision, ensuring a successful outcome every time. Understanding these steps is key to mastering her recipe.

Preparing the Chicken

The initial step involves preparing the chicken pieces. Delia often suggests trimming any excess fat from the chicken and then lightly coating the pieces in seasoned flour. This flour coating serves a dual purpose: it helps to create a golden-brown crust when fried, adding visual appeal and flavour, and it also aids in thickening the sauce as it cooks. Seasoning the flour with salt and pepper at this stage ensures the chicken itself is well-flavoured.

Browning the Chicken

In a large, heavy-bottomed pan or casserole dish, heated with a combination of butter and olive oil, the floured chicken pieces are then browned. This browning process is critical. It's not just about achieving a pleasant colour; it's about developing the 'fond' – the browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pan. This fond is packed with flavour and will be crucial when deglazing.

Sautéing the Aromatics

Once the chicken is browned and removed from the pan, the onions and garlic are added to the same pan, using the residual fat and flavour from the chicken. These are gently sautéed until softened and translucent. This gentle cooking releases their sweet aromas and flavours without burning, forming the fragrant base of the Chasseur sauce. The mushrooms are typically added at this stage too, sautéed until they begin to release their moisture and brown slightly.

Deglazing and Building the Sauce

This is often the most dramatic and flavour-enhancing step. The brandy or cognac is added to the hot pan. If flambéing, it's ignited, allowing the alcohol to burn off, leaving behind a rich, caramelised flavour. If not flambéing, the brandy is simply allowed to bubble and reduce. Following this, the white wine is poured in. The pan is scraped vigorously to lift all the browned bits from the bottom – this is the fond, and it's essential for the depth of flavour. The wine is then allowed to reduce slightly.

Next, the chopped tomatoes and chicken stock are added to the pan. These liquid ingredients combine with the reduced wine and aromatics to form the base of the Chasseur sauce. The browned chicken pieces are then returned to the pan, nestled into the sauce. Fresh thyme sprigs are often added at this point to infuse the sauce with their characteristic flavour during the simmering process.

Simmering to Perfection

The pan is then covered, and the Chicken Chasseur is left to simmer gently. This slow cooking process allows the chicken to become incredibly tender, and the flavours to meld together beautifully. Delia typically advises a simmering time of around 30-40 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and the sauce has thickened to a pleasing consistency. During this time, the chicken releases its juices into the sauce, further enhancing its flavour. It's important to check periodically and give it a gentle stir to prevent sticking.

Finishing Touches

Before serving, Delia often suggests removing the chicken and reducing the sauce further if it isn't thick enough. She also advises tasting and adjusting the seasoning with salt and freshly ground black

pepper. Finally, the dish is typically finished with a generous amount of chopped fresh parsley, which adds a burst of freshness and colour. Some recipes might also suggest stirring in a knob of butter at the end for extra richness and gloss.

Achieving the Perfect Sauce: Tips and Techniques

The sauce is undeniably the star of any Chicken Chasseur, and Delia's recipe pays meticulous attention to its development. To ensure your sauce is rich, flavourful, and perfectly textured, consider these key techniques:

- **Proper Browning:** Don't rush the browning of the chicken. Ensure the pan is hot enough, and don't overcrowd it, as this will steam rather than brown the chicken. The colour achieved is directly proportional to the flavour.
- **Don't Discard the Fond:** The browned bits stuck to the bottom of the pan after browning the chicken are liquid gold. Deglazing with brandy and wine is crucial for lifting these flavourful morsels into the sauce.
- **Reduce the Liquids:** Allowing the brandy and wine to reduce before adding other liquids concentrates their flavour and removes any harsh alcoholic notes.
- **Quality Stock:** Using a good quality chicken stock will make a significant difference to the final flavour. If using homemade stock, even better.
- **Thickening:** The flour on the chicken will help, but if the sauce still seems too thin, you can simmer it uncovered for a few minutes to allow it to reduce and thicken naturally. Alternatively, a cornflour slurry (cornflour mixed with a little cold water) can be added, but this is a less traditional method and can sometimes alter the texture. Delia usually relies on the flour and reduction.
- **Fresh Herbs:** While dried thyme can be used in a pinch, fresh thyme offers a superior flavour. Add it during the simmering stage and remove the woody stems before serving. Fresh parsley is best added at the very end for brightness.

Serving Suggestions for Your Delia Smith Chicken Chasseur

Chicken Chasseur is a versatile dish that pairs beautifully with a variety of accompaniments, allowing you to tailor the meal to your preference. Delia's recipes are often presented with simple yet effective pairings that complement the rich flavours of the Chasseur sauce.

A classic accompaniment is creamy mashed potatoes. The soft, fluffy texture of mashed potatoes is

perfect for soaking up every last drop of the delicious Chasseur sauce. Alternatively, simple boiled new potatoes, tossed with butter and parsley, offer a lighter option that still provides a satisfying starch to balance the dish.

Crusty bread is another excellent choice. A good baguette or a crusty sourdough loaf is ideal for mopping up the sauce. For a lighter meal, serve your Chicken Chasseur with steamed green vegetables such as green beans, broccoli, or asparagus. These add a welcome freshness and a touch of colour to the plate.

In some variations or for a more substantial meal, rice pilaf or even buttered noodles can also serve as suitable accompaniments. Regardless of your choice, the focus should be on a side that allows the rich flavours of the Chicken Chasseur to shine through.

Variations and Customisations

While Delia's Chicken Chasseur recipe is a benchmark, there's always room for personal touches and adaptations. The beauty of this dish lies in its flexibility.

Adding Other Vegetables

While mushrooms are a staple, you could incorporate other robust vegetables that can withstand simmering. Diced carrots or leeks, added along with the onions, can introduce additional sweetness and depth. Bell peppers, sliced, can add a different texture and colour. Ensure any added vegetables are cut to a size that will cook through within the simmering time.

Herb Variations

While thyme is traditional, a sprig of rosemary can also be a delicious addition, lending a slightly more pungent, piney aroma. Experiment with a bay leaf during the simmering process for an extra layer of subtle flavour, remembering to remove it before serving.

Wine Choices

While dry white wine is standard, some cooks prefer to use a dry sherry for a nuttier flavour profile, or even a dry red wine for a deeper, richer sauce. Be mindful that red wine will alter the colour of the final dish.

Creamy Chasseur

For an even more decadent sauce, a splash of double cream or crème fraîche can be stirred in towards the end of the cooking time. This will enrich the sauce and give it a velvety smooth texture. Be careful not to boil the sauce vigorously after adding cream, as it can split.

Different Cuts of Chicken

While bone-in pieces are recommended for flavour, you can also use chicken breasts. However, chicken breasts cook much faster and can dry out if overcooked. If using breasts, cut them into large chunks and add them later in the cooking process, or cook them separately and add them to the finished sauce just before serving to prevent them from becoming tough.

Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Even with Delia's clear instructions, some common mistakes can occur. Being aware of these can help you achieve a perfect Chicken Chasseur every time.

- **Watery Sauce:** This can happen if the pan is overcrowded during browning, leading to steaming instead of browning, or if the liquids aren't reduced sufficiently. Ensure you brown the chicken in batches and allow the wine and stock to simmer and reduce to the desired consistency.
- **Tough Chicken:** Overcooking bone-in chicken is less common, but with boneless pieces, it's a real risk. Ensure you add boneless chicken towards the end of the cooking time, or cook them separately to avoid drying them out.
- **Burnt Aromatics:** Sautéing onions and garlic over too high a heat can lead to them burning, resulting in a bitter flavour. Cook them gently until softened and translucent.
- **Lack of Flavour:** This can be due to not browning the chicken properly, not deglazing the pan effectively to incorporate the fond, or using low-quality stock. Patience with browning and careful deglazing are key.
- **Alcoholic Taste:** If the brandy or wine hasn't been cooked off sufficiently, there can be an overpowering alcoholic taste. Ensure you allow these liquids to bubble and reduce, particularly after flambéing.

The Enduring Legacy of Delia Smith's Cooking

Delia Smith has had an unparalleled impact on home cooking in Britain and beyond. Her ability to demystify complex dishes and present them in an accessible, achievable manner has empowered generations of cooks. The Chicken Chasseur recipe is a prime example of this legacy. It's a dish that many learned to cook from her books and television programs, becoming a staple in family cookbooks and a cherished memory of comfort food.

Her meticulous approach to recipe writing, with its emphasis on precise measurements, clear instructions, and understanding the 'why' behind each step, has instilled confidence and skill in countless individuals. Recipes like her Chicken Chasseur are not just about providing sustenance; they are about the joy of creating something delicious and sharing it with loved ones. This enduring appeal ensures that Delia's recipes, including her masterful Chicken Chasseur, will continue to be a beloved part of home cooking for years to come, a testament to her lasting influence on the culinary landscape.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the key ingredients in Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur?

Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur typically features chicken pieces (often thighs or breasts), bacon lardons, mushrooms, shallots or onions, garlic, white wine, chicken stock, tomatoes (often canned chopped tomatoes), thyme, bay leaf, and sometimes a touch of brandy for added depth.

Is Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur considered a difficult recipe?

No, Delia Smith is known for her accessible recipes, and Chicken Chasseur is generally considered a straightforward dish that even novice cooks can master. The steps are usually well-explained and don't involve overly complex techniques.

What kind of chicken is best for Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur?

While chicken breasts can be used, Delia often recommends chicken thighs or drumsticks. These cuts tend to stay more moist and flavorful during the braising process, resulting in a more succulent final dish.

How long does Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur typically take to cook?

The total cooking time for Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur can vary depending on the cooking method (stovetop or oven), but it generally involves a simmering period of around 30-45 minutes after the

initial browning and sautéing of ingredients.

What are some common variations or additions to Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur recipe?

Some popular variations include adding a splash of brandy for extra flavor, using different types of mushrooms, incorporating other herbs like rosemary, or adding a touch of cream at the end for a richer sauce.

Can Chicken Chasseur be made ahead of time?

Yes, Chicken Chasseur is an excellent dish to make ahead. The flavors often meld and improve when made the day before, and it can be gently reheated on the stovetop or in the oven.

What side dishes pair well with Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur?

Classic pairings for Chicken Chasseur include creamy mashed potatoes, crusty bread for soaking up the sauce, steamed green vegetables like green beans or broccoli, or a simple rice pilaf.

Where can I find Delia Smith's authentic Chicken Chasseur recipe?

Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur recipe can be found in several of her popular cookbooks, most notably 'Delia Smith's Complete Cookery Course' and 'Delia's How to Cook: Book Two.' It's also widely available on her official website.

What is the origin of the dish Chicken Chasseur?

Chicken Chasseur, meaning 'hunter's style chicken,' is a classic French dish. It's traditionally made with a mushroom and white wine sauce, often with tomatoes and shallots, evoking the flavors associated with a hunter's catch.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles related to Delia Smith's Chicken Chasseur, presented as requested:

1. *The Art of French Home Cooking*

This comprehensive cookbook delves into the foundations of classic French cuisine, offering detailed explanations of essential techniques. It likely includes variations on regional dishes and provides context for how French flavors and ingredients are traditionally combined. Expect to find chapters on sauces, poultry preparation, and vegetable cookery that would complement a Chicken Chasseur.

2. *Classic Braises and Stews*

Focusing on slow-cooked, flavorful dishes, this book explores the art of transforming tougher cuts of meat into tender, delicious meals. It would likely feature a variety of braising liquids, aromatics, and accompaniments, providing a deeper understanding of the process behind dishes like Chicken

Chasseur. Readers can learn how to build rich flavor profiles through patient simmering.

3. Mastering French Sauces: A Culinary Journey

This title suggests an in-depth exploration of the backbone of French cooking – its sauces. It would cover classic mother sauces and their derivatives, explaining the emulsification and reduction techniques crucial for creating sophisticated flavors. Understanding these principles is key to perfecting a Chicken Chasseur sauce.

4. Delia's Complete Cookery Course: A Celebration

As a retrospective of Delia Smith's influential teaching, this book would likely revisit and refine many of her iconic recipes, including potential early versions or updated takes on Chicken Chasseur. It would offer her signature clear instructions and reassuring approach to home cooking. This collection is a testament to her enduring legacy in kitchens worldwide.

5. Poultry Perfection: From Roasts to Ragouts

Dedicated entirely to the versatile world of chicken and other fowl, this book would cover a wide range of cooking methods. It would offer insights into selecting the best poultry, preparing it for cooking, and achieving perfect results. Expect recipes for everything from simple weeknight meals to more elaborate preparations, including braised chicken dishes.

6. The Humble Mushroom: A Culinary Guide

Given the prominent role of mushrooms in Chicken Chasseur, this book would likely explore their diverse varieties and culinary applications. It would detail how to properly clean, cook, and incorporate mushrooms to maximize their earthy flavors. Understanding mushrooms can elevate the taste of this classic French dish.

7. A Taste of the Loire Valley: Regional French Flavors

This book would immerse readers in the specific culinary traditions of the Loire Valley, a region known for its châteaux and fine dining. It would likely feature regional specialties, including poultry dishes and the types of ingredients commonly used in that area, potentially offering a local spin on Chicken Chasseur. Discovering these regional nuances can enhance appreciation for classic recipes.

8. Delia's How to Cook: The Essential Collection

This title points to a foundational collection of Delia Smith's recipes, designed for home cooks of all levels. It would contain many of her most beloved and frequently made dishes, presented with her characteristic clarity. Chicken Chasseur is a prime example of a dish that would likely feature in such a comprehensive collection.

9. Elegant Entertaining: Recipes for Special Occasions

This book would focus on dishes suitable for hosting guests, emphasizing presentation and sophisticated flavors. It would likely include recipes for impressive main courses that can be prepared with a degree of advance work, such as a well-executed Chicken Chasseur. The aim would be to provide guidance for creating memorable dining experiences.

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