

Pork Pate with Pickled Brandy Cherries, using Marquis de Villard VSOP French Brandy

By Katherine Puzara

Cherries

1 lb cherries, unpitted
1¼ cup red wine vinegar
¾ cup sugar
4 cardamom seeds
½ cup Marquis de Villard VSOP French Brandy

1. Prepare 2 one quart canning jars, cleaned and sterilized, then set aside.
2. Thoroughly wash and de-stem one pound cherries.
3. In large pot, bring vinegar and sugar to boil, add cardamom and reduce to simmer. Let simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Strain liquid to remove cardamom seeds and add brandy.
5. Spoon cherries into sterilized jars and pour liquid over cherries to cover them by 1 inch. Tightly close canning jars and let cool to room temperature, and then refrigerate, preferably at least 2 weeks before using.

Pork Pate

5 tbsp Marquis de Villard VSOP French Brandy
¼ cup fine brunoised shallot
1 clove garlic
1½ tbsp butter
½ tsp allspice
1 tsp finely chopped thyme
1 tsp salt
1 tsp pepper
5-6 thin slices prosciutto (enough to line mini loaf pan)
8 thin slices pancetta
½ pound ground pork
1 egg
1 tbsp heavy cream

1. Melt butter in pan over low heat, and slowly sweat shallots and garlic until fully cooked through and translucent, but without colour.
2. Add allspice, thyme, salt and pepper to shallots and garlic mixture. Add brandy to deglaze pan and reduce the liquid slightly. Remove pan from heat and let liquid cool to room temperature.
3. Chop four slices of pancetta finely, and mix in large bowl with ground pork. Pour in cooled herb and brandy mixture, egg, and cream and mix thoroughly.
4. Line miniature loaf pan mold with prosciutto so bottom is completely covered, and prosciutto is overlapping all sides, so can be wrapped around the finished pate.
5. Add pork mixture to fill pan halfway, then place remaining 4 slices pancetta on top of pork mixture and press down. Add remaining pork mixture and press down and fold prosciutto over top to cover pate.
6. Cover with plastic wrap and leave pate in fridge to marinate overnight. The next day, cook in bain marie in oven set at 300°F, and cook pate until temperature reaches 145°F, approximately 45 minutes.
7. Let cool and then press pate in fridge by placing heavy stone on top for 1 day.

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The Recipe Development

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As an aspiring chef, it is my job to be creative and inventive in everything I do. Following the recipes of somebody else can certainly be an excellent teaching tool, but I believe in order to be truly successful as a chef, you need to be able to reinterpret and create your own recipes, relying on intuition, experience, and your own personal tastes. The creation of my recipe for Pork Pate with Pickled Brandy Cherries using Marquis de Villard VSOP French Brandy is a major stepping stone for me, because it is the first time that I have taken the time to write out a recipe that I have developed, and really think about the process of creating a recipe, and making it accessible for other to use, and be inspired by. In my own kitchen, I hardly ever break open a recipe book, preferring more to browse the grocery store for the freshest ingredients and let them inspire me to be creative. When I decided to go to Stratford Chefs School, I began to realize that although my creative approach was admirable, there were some things that you need a recipe for. If you start with a good solid base that others with more experience than you may have, you are able to build upon that base and once you are more comfortable and make changes to suit your style. This is what I have done with my recipe.

I recently began working my first full time job in the kitchen as garde-manger chef at the Idlewyld Inn in London, Ontario. In the short time I have been working there, I have been given a tremendous opportunity to learn and further develop my skills and interests. On our new spring menu, we have a country pork pate which I have taken as a base for my recipe here, but adjusted to suit my taste and personal style, and as well to add flavours and textures that pair very well with the Marquis de Villard VSOP French Brandy. The sous chef at my restaurant has served as an incredible mentor for me, and the pate we have on the menu now is his recipe, but my recipe with the Pickled Brandy Cherries is more suited to summer when cherries are in season (although could be served anytime, as the preserved cherries will last for months). As much as I can, I like to bring local ingredients into my cooking, and

cherries are one of my all-time favourite fruits. I have very fond memories of going cherry picking with my family as a child, climbing trees to reach the abundant clusters at the top, and bringing them home and sitting with my sisters at the edge of the road, having competitions seeing who could spit the cherry pits farthest.

Cherries and Brandy are a very classic culinary pairing, but I think that the old saying “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” applies very well to my recipe. The pickling of the cherries stands up well to the tart cherries, and the sweet and rich flavor of the brandy brings forward a very nice sweet and sour balance. The cardamom adds a hint of spice and numbing flavor which compliments the rich oaky flavor of the brandy as well. As well as using local ingredients, I like to take inspiration from various international cuisines as well. The pate itself is based on French technique and flavors, but I was thinking of Asian sweet and sour pork recipes when pairing the cherries with the pate, and as well wanted to incorporate traditional Italian meats like prosciutto and pancetta into the pate, because I like their salty and refined flavor, which contrasts well with the brandy. I really enjoy pork in pate, because it can absorb flavours so well, without being too overwhelming on its own, and when paired with the brandy gives it a rich, luscious texture and helps to enhance all of the other ingredients flavours. Overall, I think I have come up with a pate that is well balanced because it combines rich and full flavours without being too overwhelming, and it has very good contrasts with sweet, sour, salty and sweet aspects to it. I chose to make the pate a smaller size because I thought that this would be a more accessible size for people who were making it at home. In the restaurant, we make our pate with two and a half pounds of pork, and although it keeps for a long time, the small loaf pan is a more convenient size and portion amount for home use.

I am not much of a brandy drinker myself, but after tasting the Marquis de Villard VSOP French Brandy, I really was inspired to use it as a starting point for more of my own dishes. I think it is a very versatile Brandy which is well balanced and very smooth, and I found it amazing how it really enhanced the flavours in the food I used it with which were already there, but as well imparted its own distinct flavor and aroma to further improve the quality of the dish. My process in developing this recipe has inspired me to start recording my trials in the kitchen much more, because I think that as I develop my skills further, it will be useful to be able to look to my past experiences and either expand upon them further. I hope that someday I will be able to compile my unique recipes into a cookbook to inspire others not just to copy the recipes, but to see them as inspiration to create their own new and wonderful ideas.