

Chicken-fried Sweetbreads with Black Pepper Gravy and Baby Mustard Greens

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2006 Liparita Stag's Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon

2 lbs. veal sweetbreads, soaked overnight in ice water
all-purpose flour
buttermilk
1 qt. brown chicken or veal stock or chicken or beef broth, low-sodium
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
4 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
1 bay leaf
black pepper, Worcestershire sauce, and Tabasco sauce
8 oz. baby red mustard greens or spinach, stemmed, washed, and dried
2 Tbsp. bacon fat or vegetable oil
4 each shallots, thinly sliced
1 tsp. chili flakes
1 clove garlic, microplaned
1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar salt and pepper

In a large pot of simmering water, cook the sweetbreads for three minutes, or until almost firm to the touch (they should be about medium well). Remove to a plate lined with paper towels. Immediately cover with another dinner plate and weight down, balanced and refrigerated, so the sweetbread will be flat and about 1 inch thick once cooled and set. Peel any thick membrane from the sweetbreads and cut into 4 roughly equal portions, disregarding any sinew or overcooked corner pieces. Set aside in a bowl and cover with buttermilk.

Bring the stock to a simmer. In a separate sauté pan, heat the oil over medium heat and stir in the flour with a whisk. Cook carefully, stirring, until the mixture is blond, then whisk it into the simmering stock. Turn the heat down to a bare simmer, and skim the gravy as a film forms on top. Add the bay leaf and about forty grinds of black pepper. It must simmer for at least an hour; then strain it through a fine chinois or mesh strainer, season aggressively with Worcestershire and Tabasco, and keep (covered) in a hot place.

Heat the bacon fat over medium-low heat in a small saucepot. Stir in the shallots until they sizzle, then the garlic and chili flake. Turn down to very low, cover, and let cook until the shallots are completely soft. Stir in the red wine vinegar and keep warm. Heat a large, deep pot half full with vegetable oil over medium heat to 350 degrees.

Heat a large sauté pan over a medium flame and add a film of vegetable oil. Quickly wilt the greens and stir in the shallot mixture. Season with salt and keep warm in that pan. Season two batches of 2 cups all-purpose flour liberally with salt and pepper. Dredge the sweetbreads in one bowl of flour, then fresh buttermilk, then the second bowl of flour. Fry immediately in the hot oil for five minutes or until browned to your satisfaction.

Divide the Greens among four hot plates. Drain the sweetbreads on paper towels and season them with salt and pepper. Serve the gravy on the side for your guests.