

Savory Pan-Roasted Pheasant

Preparation time: 10 minutes | Cooking time: 12–18 minutes | Serves 4



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Some of the world's most delicious dishes are made with some of the most unlikely ingredients. Many scrumptious Asian foods contain a dash of fermented fish or soy sauce. French recipes often call for a teaspoon of tomato paste. Italian casseroles and stews receive a topping of pungent Parmesan cheese. Americans top their burgers and steaks with sautéed fungi (mushrooms). Then there's crumbled bleu cheese, which smells like an old gym locker yet somehow adds an appetizing tang to salads.

All these ingredients impart a savory, soul-satisfying taste that, in cooking circles, is called umami. A Japanese word variously translated as “yummy,” “deliciousness,” or “a pleasant savory flavor,” umami is now considered by food scientists as the fifth taste category (in addition to sweet, sour, bitter, and salty). It's the unique, savory flavor in cheeses, smoked meats, meat broths, mushrooms, the flavor enhancer MSG, and even catsup.

This delicious umami-packed game dish is based on *New York Times* food writer Melissa Clark's Garlicky Chicken With Lemon-Anchovy Sauce. Lemon-anchovy sauce? I know. The thing is, anchovy fillets pack a powerful umami flavor. Though inedible to many (including me) on their own, they greatly enhance other flavors like garlic and lemon.

As with braising venison shanks, you'll have to trust me on this one; the dish is fantastic. However, it's not a big hit with most kids, who usually don't appreciate sour, bitter, or umami flavors until they reach adulthood. 🐾

—Tom Dickson

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ¼ lbs. pheasant breast or thighs
(or 4-5 skinless chicken thighs)*
- ½ c. flour, seasoned with salt and pepper
- 1 egg, beaten with 1 T. water
- ½ c. panko bread crumbs
- ¼ c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 5 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed
- 5 anchovy fillets
- 2 T. drained capers, patted dry
- 1 large pinch red pepper flakes
- ½ c. white wine
- 1 lemon, halved
- Fresh chopped parsley, for serving

DIRECTIONS

Place the flour, beaten egg, and bread crumbs each in separate shallow bowls.

In a large skillet, over medium heat, add the oil. When the oil is hot, add the garlic, anchovies, capers, and pepper flakes. Cook, stirring to break up the anchovies, until the garlic browns around the edges and the anchovies dissolve, 3 to 5 minutes. Push the ingredients out of the way against the side of the skillet.

Pat dry the pheasant and dredge each piece in flour, egg, then bread crumbs. With your fingers, press the crumbs into the egg mixture. Add the pheasant to the skillet and cook until nicely browned on one side, 4 minutes*.

Flip the meat and cook another 4 minutes, until it is cooked through.

When the pheasant is done, transfer it to a plate. Add to the skillet the white wine and the juice of one lemon half. Cook for 30 seconds, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Return the pheasant to the pan and cook in the sauce for another 15 to 30 seconds.

Transfer everything to a serving platter. Squeeze the remaining lemon half over the pheasant and garnish with chopped parsley. Serve with potatoes, rice, or egg noodles.

*For pheasant thighs, increase all cooking times by 50 percent. For chicken thighs, double cooking times.