



LandScape

Wild rabbit loins with pancetta on braised puy lentils and curly kale

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| Rabbit | Lentils |
| 12 large rabbit loins, skin removed | 350g puy lentils |
| 12 rashers thinly sliced pancetta, rind removed | 150g finely diced celery |
| 10g rosemary, chopped finely | 150g finely diced carrots |
| 30g extra virgin olive oil | 150g finely diced shallots |
| 10g crushed black peppercorns | 3 bay leaves |
| 5g lemon zest | 12 fennel seeds |
| | 200ml white wine |
| | Curly Kale |
| | 1kg curly kale, ripped into small pieces |
| | 50g unsalted butter |
| | 20g sliced garlic |

Bring a large pan of water to the boil. Add the lentils and simmer for 10 mins. Leave to stand in the water for two mins, then drain. Coat with olive oil and cool on a tray. Sauté shallots, carrots and onions slowly in olive oil until very soft. Add fennel seeds and bay leaves. Increase heat and add the lentils and wine. Cook to evaporate the liquid. Keep warm.

Remove silver skin from the rabbit and discard. Place in a flat rectangular bowl and scatter with seasoning and herbs. Marinate for a minimum of four hours in the fridge. After removing, wrap with the pancetta rashers.

Preheat two frying pans adding sliced garlic and olive oil. Pan fry the rabbit loins until the pancetta is crispy. Remove to a tray. When ready to assemble, place in oven preheated to 180C/gas mark 4 to cook through for 5 mins.

For the kale, heat butter and garlic until the butter browns. Add kale and cook vigorously with a few extra squirts of olive oil.

To serve, spoon the lentils on to a bed of kale and arrange the rabbit loins on top.



A RURAL RETREAT

SET AMONG NARROW lanes and rolling fields, the small, peaceful village of Baughurst is steeped in history. Sitting on the edge of Hampshire's beautiful North Downs, its homes date back to the 17th and 18th centuries. One of them is a simple, 18th century rendered building, the Wellington Arms.

The agricultural landscape is largely unchanged from Victorian times, with small fields and hedges forming the boundaries. At one time much of the land was heathland used to grow birch trees to make besom brooms. Today sheep graze in pastures surrounded by large areas of deciduous wood as the vast oak and beech trees turn to autumnal gold and red. Wildlife abounds, from badgers, rabbits and deer to the rare Purple Emperor butterfly.

An old Roman road from Silchester to Colchester runs through the diamond-shaped parish, known as the Old Travelway. The Duke of Wellington was granted an estate at Stratfield Saye, seven miles away, for defeating Napoleon in 1815, at the battle of Waterloo. This estate included Baughurst and, from 1817 to 1943, the Dukes were the village's principal landowners. This ended when the land was cleared to build

RAF Aldermaston during the Second World War.

Set in three acres on the outskirts of the village, the Wellington Arms takes its name from the Dukes. It is believed to have originally been a shooting lodge. "We are surrounded by fields," says Simon Page, who owns the pub with partner and chef Jason King. "In autumn, the colours are spectacular especially in the evenings, as the low setting sun shines through the oak and beech leaves."

In the last eight years Simon and Jason have established a small plum orchard in the garden. In addition, they built four raised beds using old sleepers. "The soil here is a waterlogged clay, so we improve it by adding chicken manure. Recycled garden waste is used as a top dressing every two years," says Simon. As well as being functional, the gardens, which can be seen from the pub, are immaculately tended.

Jason and Simon grow fruit and vegetables to supply the pub kitchen, planting crops in succession to ensure a steady source. In September and October, pumpkins, courgettes and squash are harvested to roast and bake. Damsons gathered from two large trees are used to make vodka, preserves and desserts such as home-made fruit sorbet. Apples come from a

A historic setting on the beautiful North Downs is the perfect place for homegrown food and game

neighbour's orchard, while blackberries and sloes are foraged from nearby hedgerows. The sloes are used for flavoured gin.

Pigs and a small herd of Jacob sheep are kept to provide meat. The sheep's wool is knitted into tea cozies by Simon's mother. A flock of rare breed and rescued hens supplies the kitchen with eggs. Honey comes from their own hives.

At this time of year local game plays an important role on the menu. "Venison pie is very popular, as well as our game terrine with rabbit and pheasant. Jason also cooks grouse, partridge and quail," says Simon. "We source it locally from our butcher, or sometimes customers bring it to us. We believe it is important to know the providence of all our produce. Serving game fits in well with our ethos of serving the best food from the area." ■

• Words: Fiona Cumberpatch

CONTACT
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Photography: Stuart Cox; Jason Ingram; taken from Kitchen Garden Experts, Frances Lincoln £20