

**Provided by Chris Archambault for the Crediton Food Festival June 2010
Lamb Sweetbreads, Wild Garlic Gnocchi, Morels & Asparagus**

Ingredients for 4:

4-500gm Lamb sweetbreads
Milk to cover
1 Bay leaf
2tbsp Water
2tbsp Unsalted butter
5tbsp All purpose flour
1tsp Dijon mustard
1-2tbsp Finely chopped wild garlic
3tbsp Grated gruyere cheese
1 Large egg
12 Medium size morels
8 Asparagus spears
Butter for basting
Capers
Lemon juice
Seasoning
Sunflower oil
Flour to dust
Chickweed and/or watercress (optional)

Method:

- 1) Soak your sweetbreads overnight in a large container of cold water.
- 2) Drain and place your sweetbreads in a saucepan with the bay leaf and cover with milk.
- 3) Bring the saucepan to a boil and simmer gently for five minutes.
- 4) Drain and immediately plunge your sweetbreads into ice water until completely cooled.
- 5) Peel off the membrane and fat from the sweetbreads and lay out on a plate covered with cling film.
- 6) Press under a heavy weight, (fry pan stacked with tins) for a couple hours. Refrigerate.
- 7) Set up a mixer with the paddle attachment.
- 8) Combine the water, butter and a pinch of salt in a medium saucepan and bring to simmer.
- 9) Reduce the heat, add all the flour at once and stir rapidly with a wooden spoon until the dough pulls away from the sides of the pan. The dough should be glossy, smooth and moist but not sticking to the bottom of the pan.
- 10) Continue to stir for about five minutes, keeping the heat low to avoid colouring. When enough moisture has evaporated, steam will rise from the dough.
- 11) Immediately transfer the dough to the mixing bowl.
- 12) Add the mustard, wild garlic and a couple pinches of salt.
- 13) Mix for a few seconds to incorporate the ingredients, then add the cheese.
- 14) With the mixer on the lowest speed, add the egg and beat until fully incorporated.
- 15) Place the dough in a piping bag and let it rest for 30 minutes.
- 16) Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil and keep at a simmer.
- 17) With one hand, evenly and slowly squeeze out 2cm nuggets of the gnocchi whilst slicing them off with a small knife into the simmering water with the other. This task should be done rapidly so that the gnocchi all cook at relatively the same time. Cook for 2-3 minutes, then plunge into ice water. You should get 40 gnocchi.
- 18) Drain and reserve.
- 19) Pre-heat your oven to its lowest setting.
- 20) In a large saucepan of boiling salted water, blanch your asparagus for 3-4 minutes depending on thickness. Plunge into ice water, drain when cooled, slice into oblique pieces and reserve.

21) Season and dust your sweetbreads with a little flour. Fry your sweetbreads on a high heat in a little sunflower oil, basting with a knob of frothing butter until browned. Keep warm in the oven.
22) Using a hot dry pan drop your morels in and once they start to cook add a little sunflower oil and some butter.
23) Add a little more butter and oil and drop in your gnocchi and fry until browned. Quickly toss in your asparagus to warm. Season lightly.
24) Drain the above on kitchen towel and using the same pan make a quick beurre noisette. Heat a few tablespoons of butter to near burning point, then arrest this cooking with the squeeze of half a lemon and a small handful of capers. Et voila, beurre noisette.

To serve:

Arrange your sweetbreads, gnocchi, asparagus and morels divided amongst four plates. Top with spoonfuls of your hot beurre noisette and a few choice leaves of watercress or chickweed if handy. A glass of Furlan prosecco would not go amiss with such a luxurious entree. A dish that may require a little finesse but screams spring with every mouthful. Bon appetit.

Notes:

On sweetbreads:

Culinarily, sweetbreads are the thymus and pancreas gland of a calf or lamb. A great entry point for those dubious of offal. So sweet and succulent, I challenge anyone not to flutter a slight moan upon first tasting these little beauties. I once convinced a squamish group to think of them as posh chicken nuggets. Anything to get someone to have a go. Not sure of the strange etymology, possibly some medieval chef trying to get court to forget their origin? Anyhoo, they cook up a treat. Similar to brains in the way they are very forgiving whilst cooking. They can be forgotten about for awhile in the oven if you are busy and will not overcook. Piper's Farm Shop in Magdalen Street usually have a few stashed away for the discerning diner.

On wild garlic:

A first sign of spring. This wild relative of the chive is packed full of a garlic punch that dissipates nicely after the initial burst of flavour. Found around the banks of streams and rivers, Devon is awash with the stuff at the moment. Great for soups, raw in salads, pesto or finishing risottos. Don't miss out on this, the very best of wild free food. Also known as ramsons, wood garlic and funnily enough, Canada garlic.

On gnocchi:

The Italian name for small dumplings made from semolina, wheat flour or potatoes. This is one of the few times I prefer a French preparation over an Italian one. The above recipe is for 'gnocchi a la Parisienne'. Essentially a choux pastry that is prepared to look similar to Italian gnocchi. I find the recipe more reliable due to Italian gnocchi being a bit fussy depending upon your potato type, how dry you can cook them and how much you work the dough. Regardless of which you prefer, gnocchi is a great dish that is very flexible as a garnish or meal in its own right and lends itself to many different sauces.

On asparagus:

Aaah...English asparagus. So perfect and the greatest harbinger of spring. Delight in the English asparagus season and deny those Thai and Peruvian hypermarket stalks in December. A great grower around these parts is Mr. John Rowswell, farmer and character extraordinaire. Just remember to cook them soon after picking, those sugars turn to starch quick and take care not to overcook. A wise old chef told me once, 'You can tell how posh a restaurant is by how close to the tip they cut their asparagus.' If you do trim it right down, save the rest for soup.

On morels:

Morchella, or true morels are a natural wonder and a culinary delicacy. Again, a sure sign of spring, they can be found around The West Country if you know where to look. Once you have

found a few, mark that trail off...they spring up every year around the same spots. A classic of French cuisine, their subtle flavour and fabulous honeycomb appearance put them high on the list of chefs' favourite ingredients.

Parting shot:

Prince Regent: 'Careme, you will make me die of indigestion. I want to eat everything you send to the table, and the temptation is too great.'

Antonin Careme: 'Sir, my business is to provoke your appetite; it is not for me to regulate it.'