



GIBLET BOLOGNESE (a.k.a. RAGÙ)

A long, slow simmer in a heavy non-reactive pot is what makes the flavors blend in a Bolognese. It also allows the connective tissue to break down and melt into the sauce. The results are rich and creamy. I recommend using a food processor if you have one to save time mincing vegetables. You can also use the food processor to chop semi-frozen gizzards and hearts. Thaw them just enough to break them apart and pulse. The intense sinew of gizzards dulls knives quickly and tries my patience on a ¼ dice!

INGREDIENTS

¼ c. crumbled dried porcini mushrooms (optional, but they add such a deep earthy element)
1 c. hot water
4 T. olive oil
2 oz. pancetta, finely chopped, or thick cut bacon (optional, but oh so good!)
1 large onion, minced
1 large carrot, minced
2 stalks celery, minced
5 cloves garlic, minced or crushed
2 pounds chicken hearts and gizzards, trimmed of toughest tissue and cut into ¼-inch dice or ground coarsely
2 bay leaves
2 large fresh sage leaves
Small bundle of fresh thyme
2 T. minced parsley
1 ½ c. dry white wine
2 T. tomato paste
3 c. poultry or meat stock
2 c. drained canned tomatoes, crushed
Salt and pepper, to taste

Stir the mushroom pieces into a bowl of cold water, let the particles settle, and lift out the mushrooms. Repeat to remove grit or debris. Once rinsed, pour hot water over mushrooms to soften.

Heat the oil in a heavy 6-quart pot over medium heat. Add the pancetta or bacon (if using) and minced onions, carrot and celery. Stir them occasionally, about 8 minutes, until the onions are translucent, not brown. Add the garlic, sauté for a few minutes more. Increase heat to medium high, and add the chopped or ground gizzards and hearts. Once they lose their pink, lower the heat to medium-low and brown the meat slowly, taking ~30 minutes. Scrape and turn the meat frequently to keep it from sticking.

Lift the mushrooms out of their liquid, strain and reserve the liquid. Stir the mushrooms, parsley, bay leaf, thyme and sage into the pot. Sauté for 2-3 minutes over medium-low heat. Add mushroom liquid to the pot. Let it bubble slowly over medium-low and reduce until the liquid has mostly evaporated. Blend in the wine and tomato paste. Keeping the wine at a slow bubble, reduce it to nothing. Repeat the process with 1 cup of the stock. Stir in the remaining 2 cups of stock and tomatoes. Bring to a very slow bubble.

Partially cover the pot. Simmer 1-2 hours, or until the gizzards are tender and the sauce is thick but not dry. Add water or more stock if necessary. Season with salt and pepper. **Optional:** Let the sauce cool a short while off the heat, then skim off the fat. This sauce freezes well for a quick mid-week dinner.

To Serve: Bring the sauce to a simmer, toss with freshly cooked pasta, and serve accompanied by freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.