

Easy Spring Chicken Pie with a Pea and Ham Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients: for the pie

3 - 4 chicken breasts
2 large leeks – cleaned and cut into 1 cm thick rounds
6 - 8 large chestnut mushrooms – cut into medium chunks or sliced
1 chicken stock pot/cube
Large knob of butter
1 tablespoon of Dijon mustard
1 - 2 tablespoons of plain flour
Handful of tarragon or thyme leaves (your preference)
2 tablespoons of crème fresh or double cream
Salt and pepper to season
One sheet of ready rolled puff pastry
1 egg yolk

for the salad

1 bag of fresh pea shoots
1 packet of sugar snap peas
1 packet of Parma or Serrano ham
1 tablespoon of Extra Virgin olive oil
Juice of half a lemon
Maldon sea salt and black pepper

Method:

Heat your oven to 180°C (350°F or gas mark 4). Start by taking your pastry out of its packaging and cut your desired shapes for individual lids. Place on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Score 1cm around the outside edge of your shapes to allow the pastry to rise in the oven. Beat one egg yolk and glaze the pastry. Put in the oven for 18- 25 minutes. To check these are done, ensure you have a golden top and the pastry has risen, and the bottom has a crunch (no soggy bottoms please!). Once they are done you can remove them from the oven, set aside ready for reheating for 1 minute before you serve.

Meanwhile bring a medium pan of water to the boil, about half full enough to cover the chicken once added. Dissolve the stock pot/cube in the water and stir. Prepare the chicken breasts, removing any skin, unwanted fat or sinew. Cut the breasts in half lengthways so they are all the same size. Bring the stock to a gentle simmer before adding in the chicken breasts. These will take around 6-10 minutes to poach, we don't want to overcook the chicken at this stage they will continue to cook in the pie. When ready remove them and set aside on a plate to cool slightly.

While the chicken is poaching you could prepare the mushrooms and leeks.

Take a saucepan and on a low heat gently melt the butter, add in the leeks and let them soften without colouring too much, after 3-4 minutes add your mushrooms and let them soften too. If anything is catching you can add a little more butter.

After the veg has softened and has a slight colour we can sprinkle over the flour, stir this in so the flour combines with the butter. Make sure you stir well for a few minutes to cook out the flour as it starts to thicken the mixture.

Take a ladle and start to deglaze the vegetables with the stock from the poaching pan, stirring as you add a ladle at a time to get the mixture to a sauce consistency. We will be adding cream at the end so don't make the sauce too runny at this point. On a low heat, let the sauce simmer gently before adding the herbs and Dijon mustard stirring occasionally until combined.

Cube the chicken into large bite sized pieces and add this to the sauce. The sauce should coat the chicken and be a pie filling consistency. Season with salt and pepper to taste and continue to simmer for around 5 – 8 minutes.

Add the crème fresh or cream and stir to combine – allow this to thicken a little more if needed. Remove from the heat and cover with lid or foil to keep warm.

For the salad:

Crisp up the ham in the oven, air fryer or under a grill. Put it on a lined baking tray in small clusters but keep an eye on it until it's crisp. This will only take a few minutes. Set to one side.

Slice the sugar snap peas length ways or diagonally.

Add your Extra Virgin olive oil to a bowl and squeeze in the lemon juice – add a good pinch of salt flakes and a good grind of black pepper. Swirl around the bowl so the seasoning coats the sides, add the sugar snap peas and crispy ham – toss in the dressing and at the last minute add in the pea shoots and gently toss again.

To serve:

Reheat the pie lids for 1 minute in a hot oven. Slice the pie lids horizontally and add in the chicken pie filling to the base, pop the lid on top.

Serve with a generous helping of pea and ham salad.