

Chicken Breast Valle di Valorz

The beautiful verdant Valle di Valorz is opposite the village of San Bernardo, the capitol city of the Municipality of Rabbi in the north of Italy. It offers a real picturesque landscape: Wooden slopes, rocky faces, waterfalls, and meadows of gentle slopes embellished with farmsteads. You can trek deep into a nature and cultural trail to discover the whole territory of Valorz. The area is also host to exciting ice climbing of the waterfalls during winter, attracting mountaineers from around the world.

This is a dish with a bold flavor and mouth-filling texture. It is rich and should not compete or blend into the side dishes. It is elegant yet simple and quickly prepared.

4 skinless chicken breasts
2 ounces Kalamata olives
1 tin anchovies/sardines in oil (sardines give a slightly milder flavor)
1/2 teaspoon capers
2 ounces grated Parmesan cheese
Fresh mozzarella cheese
2 knuckles garlic
1/4 cup chopped parsley
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
Ground black pepper
Extra-virgin olive oil

Put the olives, capers, 1 chopped garlic knuckle, and 4 anchovies or sardines with about half the oil in the tin into a small food processor or blender and blitz to a chunky puree. Transfer the tapenade into a bowl and mix thoroughly with the grated Parmesan.

Slice the chicken breast open along the side to make a pocket. Be careful to not slice in half. Stuff the tapenade in equal portions into each breast. Rub the breasts with olive oil and sprinkle lightly with black pepper. Lower the butter, the other garlic knuckle finely chopped, and about another tablespoon of olive oil to a pan on medium-high heat and allow butter to melt into the oil. When butter is melted, lower each stuffed breast into pan and cook about 3-5 minutes per side depending on thickness. When both sides are cooked cut the fire and place a thin slice of fresh mozzarella over each breast and put the lid over the pan to trap heat and melt the cheese. Alternatively, place pan in a pre-heated oven at 350F for about 5 minutes or until the mozzarella is melted.

Serve on a bed of baby spinach tossed in a very light olive oil and red wine vinegar vinaigrette. A side of lightly sautéed cherry tomatoes would be a nice acidic counter. Pair with a Beaujolais or Rhone (red or white) wine.

By: Eric N. Valor