

Lesson Plan: Preparing Rabbit with Modica Dark Chocolate

Subject: Culinary Arts / Traditional Sicilian Cuisine

Grade Level: High School Culinary Students

Duration: Approximately 2 hours

Objectives

Knowledge: Learn about Sicilian flavors and the combination of savory and sweet through unique ingredients like Modica chocolate in a traditional rabbit dish.

Skills: Practice searing, braising, and balancing flavors; understand how chocolate can enrich a savory sauce.

Attitudes: Appreciate the use of local ingredients and the history of Sicilian cuisine, particularly how unique ingredients create complexity in dishes.

Materials Needed

Ingredients

- **For the Rabbit:**
 - 500 g rabbit, cut into pieces
 - 10 g extra virgin olive oil
 - 1 garlic clove (5 g)
 - 10 g green olives in brine, pitted
 - 5 g capers
 - 10 g tomato paste
 - 5 g vinegar
 - 5 g salt
 - 2 g parsley, chopped
 - 10 g Modica dark chocolate, grated or finely chopped
- **For the Potatoes:**
 - 100 g potatoes, cubed

Equipment

- Large skillet or frying pan
- Saucepan
- Knife and cutting board
- Grater for chocolate
- Tongs
- Mixing bowl



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Lesson Outline

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- **Discussion Starter:** Engage students with questions about their experiences with Sicilian or Mediterranean cuisine.
- **Cultural Context:** Explain how Modica chocolate, with its unique texture and flavor, plays a role in Sicilian dishes, and introduce the concept of sweet and savory flavor combinations in traditional cooking.
- **Lesson Objectives:** Outline the focus on searing, slow cooking, and incorporating chocolate as a subtle enhancement in the sauce.

2. Safety and Sanitation Briefing (5 minutes)

- **Key Points:** Emphasize the importance of safely handling raw meat and cleaning surfaces.
- **Demonstration:** Show students how to sanitize surfaces and tools after handling rabbit.

3. Ingredient and Technique Overview (10 minutes)

- **Presentation:** Review each ingredient, especially the use of Modica chocolate as a savory enhancer.
- **Culinary Terms:** Define terms like “sear,” “braise,” and “deglaze” to build understanding of each step.

Cooking Activity

a. Preparing and Searing the Rabbit (15 minutes)

- **Instructions:** Cut the rabbit into pieces, rinse briefly under cold water, and pat dry. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat, add crushed garlic, and sauté until golden, then remove.
- **Activity:** Students season and sear the rabbit pieces, learning to create an even browning on all sides.
- **Discussion:** Explain why searing adds flavor and creates a foundation for the sauce. *AI Tip:* AI can help monitor searing time and adjust heat to prevent over-browning, ensuring the garlic and rabbit develop flavor without burning.

b. Braising with Flavor Additions (20 minutes)

- **Instructions:** Add the olives, capers, and tomato paste to the skillet, stirring to coat the rabbit. Deglaze with vinegar, letting it evaporate before covering and lowering the

heat. Allow the rabbit to cook gently for 40–50 minutes, adding a small amount of water or broth if necessary.

- **Activity:** Students practice stirring and adjusting heat as they observe the sauce forming.
- **Discussion:** Discuss the role of olives, capers, and vinegar in creating a balanced, savory-sweet base for the dish.

AI Tip: AI can monitor braising time, suggesting when to add liquid to prevent drying out and maintain a rich sauce.

c. Adding the Modica Chocolate (10 minutes)

- **Instructions:** During the last 10 minutes of cooking, sprinkle in the grated or chopped Modica dark chocolate, stirring until fully melted and incorporated into the sauce.
- **Activity:** Students add and stir in the chocolate, noting how it thickens and enriches the sauce.
- **Discussion:** Explain the importance of adding chocolate toward the end to prevent burning and how it enhances the depth of flavor in the sauce.

AI Tip: AI can provide reminders for when to add chocolate and monitor temperature to prevent overheating, ensuring it melts smoothly into the sauce.

d. Preparing and Adding the Potatoes (15 minutes)

- **Instructions:** Peel and cube the potatoes, then boil in salted water until tender. Drain and add them to the skillet with the rabbit in the last few minutes of cooking, allowing them to absorb the flavors.
- **Activity:** Students prepare the potatoes and observe how they blend with the sauce.
- **Discussion:** Discuss how potatoes serve as a comforting, neutral addition that soaks up the flavors of the dish.

Final Steps and Assembly

Adjust salt if needed, and garnish with fresh parsley before serving.

Serving Suggestion

Serve the rabbit in shallow bowls, garnished with chopped parsley and paired with crusty bread for soaking up the sauce.

Assessment

- **Observation:** Monitor students' techniques in searing, deglazing, and incorporating ingredients at the right stages.
- **Questions and Answers:** Ask students to explain how each flavor component (e.g., chocolate, olives, vinegar) contributes to the dish's balance.

- **Reflection:** Have students summarize their experience, focusing on how they achieved a balanced, savory-sweet sauce.

Closure (10 minutes)

- **Recap:** Review the steps in creating a savory chocolate sauce and discuss how it differs from traditional sweet chocolate uses.
- **Student Sharing:** Allow students to share insights on flavor combinations or challenges they encountered.
- **Encouragement:** Suggest trying different proteins or using the Modica chocolate technique in other sauces.

Extensions

- **Culinary Exploration:** Research other Sicilian dishes that use unique sweet ingredients, such as citrus or dried fruit, in savory recipes.
- **Menu Planning Project:** Design a Sicilian-themed menu that incorporates chocolate in unexpected ways.

Resources

Handouts

- Detailed recipe with notes on balancing savory and sweet flavors.
- Information on Modica chocolate and its role in Sicilian cuisine.

Recommended Reading

- Articles on Sicilian cooking techniques and balancing unique flavor profiles.

Notes for the Instructor

- **Preparation:** Pre-measure ingredients to allow students to focus on technique.
- **Safety Considerations:** Remind students about proper handling and sanitation for raw meat.
- **Adaptations:** For dietary adaptations, consider using tofu or tempeh as an alternative protein.