

Lievre a la Royale at Harris Organic Wines

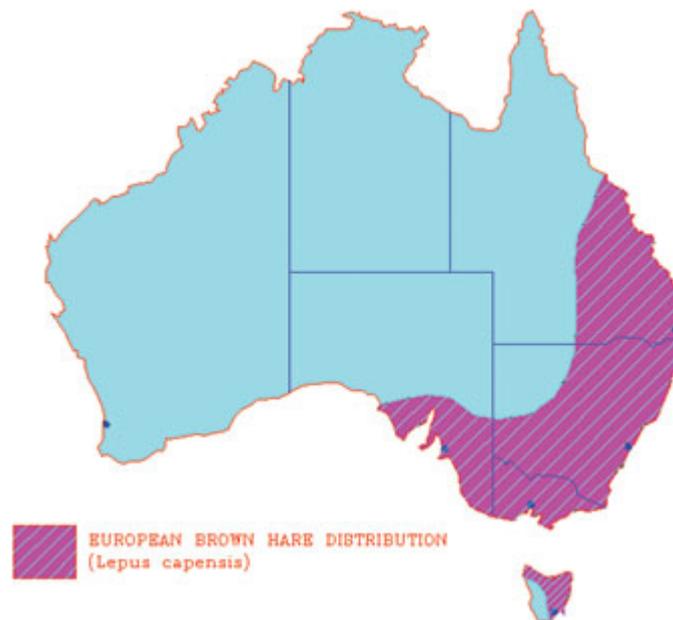
Jugged Hare! 2013

On Saturday last – Duncan began his painstaking preparation of Jugged Hare.

For those of you not in the know, Jugged Hare (civet de lievre) is the stewing of a whole hare for many hours (7 in fact) not necessarily in a jug – which refers to a method whereby one cooks the hare in a tall jug standing in a pan of water.

“Where do you get your hands on a hare?” – I hear you asking. Well, it seems we don’t have hares in Western Australia – funny – we have everything else...The European brown hare (*Lepus Capensis* - introduced throughout central and western Europe by the Romans) was in turn introduced by our colonists in 1837. It seems that the hare was found to thrive on native grasslands and woodlands, not to mention improved agricultural pasture and by the early 1900s it occurred in plague proportions.

Below is the Australian distribution of *Lepus Capensis*:



So, while Australia abounds in nature’s gifts (including kangaroos, wallabies, rabbits and *hares*), where do you find a hare if you are a Perth winemaker/gourmand like Duncan? Well, he bought one in Melbourne’s Victoria Market of course when he went over to visit his sister, flew it home in his hand luggage and lovingly put it to rest in his Baskerville freezer for a year. This was not part of the recipe – he just did not have time until after the next vintage!

According to his Elizabeth David recipe, the hare should be “...a male hare, with red fur, killed if possible in the mountainous country: of French descent (characterised by the light nervous elegance of head and limbs)... cleanly killed and so not have lost a drop of blood...”

This is because Jugged Hare is traditionally served with the hare's blood – added at the very end of the cooking process.

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Well, sorry Elizabeth, but you are in the Antipodes now and just have to go along with the colonials on this one – Duncan’s hare had no such red fur, nor nervous disposition.

Our Hare was an *Australian* breed of hare – brown and tawny like our wide brown land and with rather a laconic, can-do attitude.



You may see hares ‘boxing’ in Australia – well, that is another great Australian tradition – fighting with the Missus for breeding rights – known in the northern hemisphere as Mad March hare behaviour – here they are just accepted as normal – and having their conjugal disputes in September anyway.

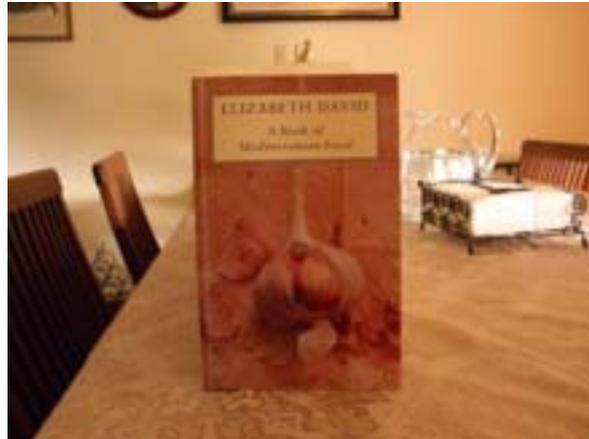
Here is the recipe that Duncan followed for his Jugged Hare (ala Australien) – with apologies to Elizabeth David and her rather more French recipe titled *Lievre a la Royale...*

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A feast for 6 people and this feast is a repeat of the recipe I cooked 30 years ago whilst in Melbourne.

It takes full six and half hours to prepare and cook, and is included in Elizabeth



David's *Book of Mediterranean Food*. As you read you will find how I went about preparing for this event.

Start at Noon for a 7pm serving.

Allow six and half hours to prepare and cook this dish – so start at noon for a 7pm serving.

Ingredients

1 hare 5-6 lbs live weight, 1.4 kgs dressed.

“You require a male hare...” **Duncan does not have a male hare – but he does have a lovely daughter...**

2-3 tablespoons of goose fat (substitute duck if desperate)

a medium-sized carrot

heart, the liver, and the lungs of a freshly caught rabbit.

250g of fatty bacon rashers; 250g of bacon in one piece.

200ml of good red wine vinegar. Two bottles of Macon or Medoc, whichever you please, but in any case not less than 2 years old. ...**Duncan used two bottles of 2011 Shiraz.**

20 cloves of garlic; 40 shallots; a bouquet garni

4 medium onions

For the second operation

(i) 125g of bacon,

(ii) the heart, liver and lungs of the hare, (substitute wild rabbit if desperate)

(iii) 10 cloves of garlic,

(iv) 20 shallots. The shallots should be about the size of a pickled onion, ie 25mm diameter.

Utensils:

“A *daubiere*, or oblong stewing pan, of well-tinned copper, 8 inches high, 15 inches long, 8 inches wide and possessed of a hermetically closing cover; a small bowl in which to preserve the blood of the hare, and later to stir it when it comes to incorporating it in the sauce; a double-handled vegetable chopper; a large shallow serving dish; a sieve; a small wooden pestle”.

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Duncan – I used our large Crueset French enamelled casserole dish with the same dimensions.

The wine to serve: “Preferably a St Julien or Moulin a Vent” **Duncan served his 2000 Chenin Blanc and a bottle of 1999 Shiraz.**

Preliminary preparations:

“Skin and clean the hare. Keep aside the heart, the liver, and the lungs. Keep aside also and with great care the blood”. **Duncan – no innards were included with the imported hare, but there was plenty of blood.**

“In the usual way prepare a medium-sized carrot, cut into four; 4 medium onions each stuck with a clove; 20 cloves of garlic; 40 shallots; a bouquet garni, composed of a bay leaf, a sprig of thyme, and some pieces of parsley” **Duncan (proudly) - the shallots in Australia are enormous – used half the number.**

”Get ready some charcoal, in *large pieces*, which you will presently be needing, *burning fast*. **Duncan – These days a fan forced oven is fine, set at 125 Celsius.**

First Operation (from half-past twelve until four o'clock):

“At 12.30 coat the bottom and sides of the stewpan with the goose fat; then at the bottom of the pan arrange a bed of rashers of bacon...Cut off the head and neck of the hare: leaving only the back and the legs. Then place the hare at full length on the bed of bacon, on its back. Cover it with another layer of bacon. Now all your bacon rashers are used up” **Duncan – all this bacon arranging is making me hungry – what’s for lunch? Vegemite sandwich of course! Cant eat too much before a feast.**



“Now add the carrot; the onions; the 20 cloves of garlic; the 40 shallots; the bouquet garni...Pour over the hare (i) the 6 oz of red wine vinegar, and (ii) a bottle and a half of 2-year-old Macon or Medoc” **Duncan – if you recall, halve the number of shallots and use Harris Organic wine!**

”Season with pepper and salt in reasonable quantity”. **Duncan – I am always reasonable... a good 2 pinches of both I reckon.**

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'At one o'clock. The *daubiere* being thus arranged, put on the lid and set the fire going (either a gas stove or an ordinary range). On the top of the lid place 3 or 4 large pieces of charcoal in an incandescent state, *well alight and glowing*. **Duncan – nope – too much smoke and bloody dangerous.**

“Regulate your heat so that the hare may cook for 3 hours, over a gentle and regular fire, continuously” **Duncan – Yep – whack it in the oven..**

'Second Operation (to be carried out during the first cooking of the hare):

“First chop exceedingly finely the four following ingredients, chopping each one separately: (i) 1/4 lb of bacon, (ii) the heart, liver and lungs of the hare, (iii) 10 cloves of garlic, (iv) 20 shallots. **Duncan - Exceedingly fine chopping going on here ...halve the shallots (very large) though or you will have onion breath for a week!**

'The chopping of the garlic and the shallots must be so fine that each of them attain as nearly as possible a molecular state.

'This is one of the first conditions of success of this marvellous dish, in which the multiple and diverse perfumes and aromas melt into a whole so harmonious that neither one dominates, nor discloses its particular origin, and so arouse some preconceived prejudice, however regrettable. **Duncan – I put them in the blender... I know... Elizabeth would think me a colonial philistine. .**

'The bacon, the insides of the hare, the garlic, and shallots being chopped very fine, and separately, blend them all together thoroughly, so as to obtain an absolutely perfect mixture. keep this mixture aside. **Duncan – well, perfect is a subjective term anyway.**

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'Third Operation (from four o'clock until a quarter to seven):

“At four o'clock. Remove the stewpan from the fire. Take the hare out very delicately;



put it on a dish. Then remove all the debris of the bacon, carrot, onions, garlic, shallot, which may be clinging to it; return these debris to the pan. **Duncan – yep, gave it a shake...**



The Sauce.

“Now take a large deep dish and a sieve. Empty the contents of the pan into the sieve, which you have placed over the dish; with a small wooden pestle pound the contents of the sieve, extracting all the juice, which forms a *coulis* in the dish. **Duncan – lucky it all went in the French “mouli” in a couple of batches.**

'Mixing the coulis and the hachis (the chopped mixture). Now comes the moment to make use of the mixture which was the subject of the second operation. Incorporate this into the *coulis*.

Heat the half bottle of wine left over from the first operation. Pour this hot wine into the mixture of *coulis* and *hachis* and stir the whole together. **Duncan - Oh no, I drank it...lucky I own a winery!**

'At half past four. Return to the stewpan (i) the mixture of *coulis* and *hachis*, (ii) the hare, together with any of the bones which may be become detached during the cooking. **Duncan – much easier to remove the bones when it has cooled off, believe me...**

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Arrangements for serving:

'At seven o'clock. Remove from the pan your hare, whose volume by this time has naturally somewhat shrunk" **Duncan – I turned a hare into a rabbit, absolutely not!** .

Attendees were Lachy, Andre, Andre's Mum, Pierro, Fiona and yours truly.



'At any rate, in the centre of the serving dish, place all that still has the consistency of meat, the bones, entirely denuded, and now useless, being thrown away, and now finally around this hare *en compote* pour the admirable sauce which has been so carefully created.' **Duncan – Errr...yes.**



Elizabeth David, following the senator's advice, notes that "to use a knife to serve the hare would be a sacrilege. A spoon alone is amply sufficient." **Duncan – quite true, the meat is very tender, as it has fallen from the bones. Serve with some green peas (in pod) and some hearty bread.**

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Duncan's serving.

This exquisite dish was served with copious amounts of French style crusty bread and some steamed peas in pod, plus copious glasses of Harris Organic 2008 Shiraz and many other wines. On this occasion we were extra spoilt with a bottle of Chateau – FIGEAC –St Emilion, vintage 1979, only 34 years old! Drinking superbly.



Then we followed the meal with some real Roquefort cheese and other delicacies.

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Lachy enjoying some Tokay, not to mention the 2000 Chenin Blanc.