

Chicken Liver Pâté

Aside from fancy cheese, there's no easier and faster way to class up a joint than to put some pâté out with all of its usual accompaniments. It's amazing that such a rich, buttery, unctuous spread can come from a humble plastic tub of organ meat. This is a must-know recipe in any cook's repertoire.

See Cook's Note on how to seal pâté with a layer of clarified butter.

Ingredients

pâté

3 sticks unsalted butter, softened, divided
1 cup sliced shallots (about 5 ounces whole shallots)
1 pound chicken livers, trimmed, rinsed, patted dry and membranes/veins removed
3 tablespoons cognac or brandy
2 tablespoons grainy dijon mustard
Generous pinch nutmeg
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

accompaniments

Chopped chives, parsley or sprigs of thyme, for garnish
Slices of baguette or brioche, toasted
Crackers
Nuts
Cornichons
Caperberries
Dried cherries
Grainy mustard

special equipment

enough crocks or ramekins to hold about 3½ cups of pâté
food processor
large fine mesh strainer (optional)

Directions

for the pâté

Melt 1 stick of the butter in a large skillet over medium heat, add the shallots, stirring to coat and sweat, until soft, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the shallots to a plate, leaving the butter in the pan. Spread out the shallots on the plate to help them cool. Increase the heat to medium-high. Working in batches, sear the chicken livers in the skillet until they turn from dark red to grey-brown on the outside (they won't sear) but still pink on the inside, 2 to 3 minutes per batch. If during the second batch the butter starts to get too dark, lower the heat. Transfer to a plate as they're done and let them cool to room temperature.

Put the shallots, livers, cognac, mustard, nutmeg, 1/2 teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper into the bowl of a food processor and process until smooth. Pulse in the remaining butter, a little at a time until it is incorporated. If you prefer a very smooth pâté, push the pâté through a large fine-mesh strainer and pack into crocks, ramekins or bowls, smoothing the tops. Press a piece of plastic wrap directly onto the surface of the pâté, then wrap tightly with more plastic wrap, and chill until firm, at least 4 hours and up to a week. The pâté will develop more flavor the longer it sits. The alcohol flavor will be more pronounced after a day.

for the accompaniments

Bring pâté to room temperature and sprinkle with chives, parsley or thyme just before serving. Set out with toasts and crackers and small bowls of cornichons, caperberries, dried cherries and grainy mustard.

Cook's Notes

If eating the pâté within a week it's not necessary to seal it with a thin layer of clarified butter. Topping with the butter will help hold the pâté for up to 2 weeks stored in the fridge. To clarify butter, melt butter in a small heavy saucepan over low heat until it bubbles and then stops, and the milk solids fall to the bottom of the pan. Spoon the butter out and pass through a fine mesh strainer, leaving the solids in the pan. Let cool slightly, then pour the butter over the pâté in their containers. Chill pâté uncovered until butter has firmed up, then wrap tightly with plastic wrap. Chill until ready to eat, within 2 weeks.

total time: 1.5 hours + 4 hours to chill

active prep: 15 minutes

serves: 3.5 cups

difficulty: *moderate*