LORI'S PICK · VERDELHO

SOURDOUGH STUFFING WITH SAUSAGE, LEEKS AND VERDELHO

Anyone who has met my sister knows she brightens every room she walks into. Our Verdelho does the same: bright, citrusy, with a little salinity that cuts through the butter and sausage. She's also an excellent bread baker, which is why the stuffing starts with her day-old sourdough.

SERVES 10–12

INGREDIENTS

- 1½ lb sourdough loaf, torn into 1-inch pieces (about 16 cups)
- 1 lb sweet Italian sausage, casings removed
- 6 Tbsp unsalted butter, plus more for the dish
- 2 large leeks, white and light green parts, halved and thinly sliced
- 1 fennel bulb, cored and chopped
- 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 Tbsp chopped fresh sage
- 1 Tbsp fresh thyme leaves
- ¾ cup Verdelho
- 2½ cups turkey or chicken stock
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

1. **Dry the bread.** Heat oven to 300°F. Spread the bread on two sheet pans and bake, tossing once, until dry but not browned, 30–40 minutes. Let cool. Raise the oven to 375°F.
2. **Brown the sausage.** Press the sausage into 4 flat patties. Cook in a large skillet over medium-high heat, undisturbed, until deeply browned, 4–5 minutes per side. Break into small pieces with a spoon and cook until no pink remains, about 2 minutes more. Move to a very large bowl with a slotted spoon, leaving the fat in the pan.
3. **Cook the vegetables.** Add the butter to the skillet and lower the heat to medium. Add the leeks, fennel, celery and a big pinch of salt. Cook, stirring often, until very soft, 10–12 minutes. Add the garlic, sage and thyme and cook 1 minute. Add the Verdelho and simmer until mostly evaporated, about 3 minutes.
4. **Combine.** Scrape the vegetables into the bowl with the sausage. Add the bread, parsley and lemon zest and toss. Whisk the stock and eggs together, pour over and toss until the bread has absorbed the liquid. Season with salt and pepper.
5. **Bake.** Butter a 9x13-inch baking dish and pack in the stuffing loosely. Cover with foil and bake 25 minutes. Uncover and bake until golden and crisp on top, 20–25 minutes more.

MAKE AHEAD

Dry the bread up to 3 days ahead and store airtight. Assemble through step 4 (hold off on the egg-stock mix) up to 1 day ahead and chill. Add the egg and stock right before baking.