TECHNIQUE: BRAISING AND BRAISING À LA MATIGNON

Chef Thomas Keller / Chapter Eleven

MASTERCLASS

TECHNIQUE: BRAISING AND BRAISING À LA MATIGNON

"I'm going to introduce you to something that I think of as transformational cooking, which means that we're going to take pieces of protein and transform them using two techniques that I'm going to teach you."

CHAPTER REVIEW

All cooking is transformational, but few techniques do more to alter the flavor and texture of meat, poultry, and seafood than braising. The braised dishes Chef Keller demonstrates here call for marinating the meat to start. That marinade is then clarified prior to cooking to remove any blood or other impurities. The mirepoix used in braised dishes flavors the sauce but is ultimately removed. When Chef Keller makes a braised dish, he always does so at least a day in advance to let the flavors cohere.

Both braising and braising à la matignon call for slow-cooking ingredients gently in liquid to tenderize them. But there are differences in the two techniques. Matignon refers to vegetables that are diced to a specific size, like a mirepoix. Unlike a mirepoix, though, which is strained out prior to serving, matignon vegetables are part of the finished dish. A traditional matignon also uses ham, but Chef Keller forgoes that, opting simply for the vegetables, which are sweated at the start. The meat then cooks on top of them, and the resulting sauce is a combination of the meat juices and the vegetables.

Both matignon and braising are time-intensive, but their results are delicious. So whatever recipe you follow, Chef Keller suggests making a large quantity. You'll want leftovers to enjoy the next day, and maybe even the day after that.