*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

**How to make Chicken Marsala ‘with what you got’**

My famous motto for my cooking classes is to “Make do with what you got.” It doesn’t mean much to a lot of folks, but to those who have to survive in the culinary world, it means Survival 101. Of course, “steak and lobster” is a very popular entree, but the costs are atrocious!

So, what do I mean by make do with what you got, you might ask. Well, a cook can follow recipes and come up with a nice dish; yet, the chefs are the ones who can create them.

Chefs know how to craft a popular dish within a reasonable cost and with the least amount of prep work, with easy-to-find ingredients; and customers would be lining up to pay top prices just to have a taste of it. You catch my drift?

When I started the business, I remember that the chef would give me a dollar to take home all the chicken wings deboned from cases and cases of whole chicken, as he didn’t have the heart to discard them in the trash.

The chicken wings these days cost $4 per pound, goodness. From a cut above being a garbage item, to becoming a delicacy that can be served in 20 different unique sauces? Now do you understand the magic of making do with what you got?

As I was organizing my little freezer, I came up with bags of chicken thighs that I was saving for a rainy day. Those were the chicken pieces that I’ve saved up for months from packages of chicken legs and thighs.

Well, a package of thigh meat usually costs $3 per pound in the market; however, a whole 10-pound bag of chicken thighs and legs is only $6-$7. That’s about 60-70 cents per pound.

After skinning and deboning, I would still get 6 to 8 pounds of meat, and I would make soup stock with the bones while setting aside the meat for later use. By gosh, I never realized that foods kept in the freezer could multiply!

Now the dilemma of what to do with all the chicken pieces. Since the bones were long gone from making porridges and soups, it’s a great opportunity to start something. So, how about Chicken Marsala, one of my favorite dishes? It is one of my favorite Italian entrees, so easy to make and absolutely delicious. It is best with some garlic toast and a glass of pinot grigio.

Well, with all that chicken meat, the best way is to season them first before you put them in the freezer, with the content clearly written on the bag. Heaven knows, I have so many bags of “stuff” which look great but I have no idea what they are, and when were they “blessed” in my freezer.

So, are you ready for to cook up my delicious Chicken Marsala recipe? As I mentioned, if you don’t have the proper ingredients, just make do with what you got.

First, it is impossible to get marsala wine here in the Northwoods, when the liquor stores are more concerned with stocking up beers and wines.

So, without a hint of Marsala wine availability, how is it possible to make the dish? Well, get out your bottle of brandy, empty half (in a glass or another bottle), then fill the other half with a combination of apricot brandy and a bit of brown sugar and grape jelly. Shake well, and that’ll be our Marsala secret ingredients.

**Ingredients (for 4)**

* 4 chicken thighs, about 6 oz. each, seasoned and dusted with flour/cornstarch
* 8 oz sliced mushrooms
* 1 stick butter
* 4 oz homemade Marsala
* 2 tbsp chopped garlic

**Method**

1. Cook the breaded chicken with butter and garlic; when they are three-fourths done, set aside.
2. Add the rest of the garlic to the pan, then the mushrooms.
3. Add the Marsala mix to the mushrooms, let the sauce thicken.
4. Put the chicken back with the mix. Let it simmer for a few minutes.
5. Sprinkle with fresh herbs – basil, tarragon, whatever you got.

Enjoy!