

**Food and drink:** Watching your weight and your budget? Lean, inexpensive and tasty, pigeon is the perfect



**Perfect combination:** Wild pigeon offers taste, lean meat and great value, argues Chris Coubrough, who has created this dish to showcase its flavours.

# Sustainable, tasty and great value too

If you don't want to be too saintly this new year, but fancy a dish that's lighter but with plenty of taste, this warm pigeon salad is just the job.

Pigeon is exceptionally tasty and is very much a sustainable meat. There is an excess of pigeons in the UK and if they aren't controlled they would decimate the countryside.

So you could say that enjoying this recipe does farmers a service by helping to control the pigeon population!

I know people can be unsure about eating pigeon and I can understand that if you are thinking about the scraggy birds in Trafalgar Square. But here in the Norfolk countryside, wood pigeons are beautiful birds, stuffed full of acorns, berries and crops.

The only bit worth eating is the breast meat; it is flavoursome, quite plump and very dark (the colour of hare but not as gamey). It is also a lean meat, with almost no fat at all on a wild bird.

Delicious cooked rare, it has an almost aubergine-coloured centre and is moist and tasty when served warm.

With a surplus of supply, pigeon is also a really good price.

So, if your New Year's resolutions include watching your weight, spending less and eating sustainable food, pigeon ticks all the boxes.

## **Pan-fried breast of pigeon with rosti potato, roast apple and black pudding**

Serves two

1 large Maris Piper potato  
50g butter  
Silpat Baking Mat  
4 ring moulds  
2 Royal Gala apples  
2 small sausages of black pudding  
Splash of olive oil  
4 pigeon breasts  
1 small bag of spinach

1 Peel potato and then slice into matchsticks using a mandolin or coarse grater.

2 Mix them with some rock salt and set aside for about 10 minutes to allow the salt to draw out water from the potato.

## **Wine choice**

Pigeon is perfect for those of us who worry that the bird on our plate, particularly the Christmas turkey – RIP – may have lived and died without ever getting airborne. All that flying is a salve for my conscience, but it loads on the flavours too; despite this dish being a salad, the pigeon need something mighty and savoury to show at its best. South Africa has a great line in dark, tenderising reds, and Adnams 2005 Barefoot Shiraz (£11.49) provides a potent match for Chris' dish.

**John Atkinson**

3 Squeeze to release as much liquid as possible and dry with a kitchen towel.

4 Melt butter and mix with the dried potato matchsticks.

5 Put Silpat Baking Mat onto a tray, place the four

ring moulds on top and arrange a thin layer of potato in each one.

6 Bake in the oven until golden (about 8-10 minutes). Remove from the oven and leave to cool on the tray.

7 Core apples, then dice both the apples and black pudding into 1cm pieces.

8 Pour olive oil into frying pan on hot stove. Season pigeon breast, place skin-side down and cook until golden brown.

9 Turn them over and cook for a further two minutes, then remove from pan.

10 Using the same pan, sauté the black pudding and apple. Wilt spinach.

11 To serve, place one cold rosti on the base, then put apple, black pudding and wilted spinach on top, followed by the pigeon.

12 Finish off by placing the second rosti on the top.