



**BRAISED RABBIT WITH TOMATOES AND WINTER SPICES**

**Serves 6**

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 whole rabbits, skinned and quartered
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 bulbs fennel, cored and quartered
- 2 medium yellow onions, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 6 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup tomato juice
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 2 star anise pods
- ½ tsp crushed chili flakes

**1.** Heat oven to 325°. Heat olive oil in a large Dutch oven over a medium-high flame until slightly smoking. Season rabbit with salt and pepper. Carefully place rabbit in the pan and brown on all sides. Remove rabbit to a plate and reserve.

**2.** Lower heat and add fennel, onions, and garlic. Slowly sweat the vegetables until they become slightly tender, about 10 minutes.

**3.** Add white wine and tomatoes and cook for 5 minutes, stirring to combine. Add tomato juice and stock and bring to a simmer. Add spices and rabbit; cover and place in oven.

**4.** Cook 2½ hours or until meat easily pulls from the bones. Season to taste and serve with polenta or your favorite pasta.

# Down the Rabbit Hole

You've enjoyed it in restaurants, but chances are you've never cooked a bunny at home. It's time for that to change. **by ADAM ERACE**

**W** **E GET IT:** There's something that feels just *wrong* about digging into Thumper or Peter Rabbit. But it's time to get over your fear of rabbit. It's a staple the world over—served in a ragù over pappardelle in Italian trattorias, braised in mustard in French bistros—and for good reason. “What venison is to beef, rabbit is to chicken,” says Josh Berry, chef at Union restaurant in Portland, Maine. “It's that next-level taste.” Rabbit is also a good deal healthier than a lot of the chicken out there, Berry says: “The mainstream food

industry hasn't locked in to rabbit yet, so you're getting a more wholesome product to start with.” You can find fresh rabbit in most good butcher shops; if you can't, D'Artagnan ships nationwide. Berry, for his part, grew up in western Maine hunting rabbits, which his mom would fricassee, stew, and fold into potpies. At Union, he prefers to braise them—the extra-high gelatin content in the animal's bones thickens and flavors the braise as it cooks—with tomatoes, fennel, cinnamon, and star anise. When the meat falls off the bone, it's ready for plating over velvety polenta or your favorite pasta. So, hop to it. ■

FOOD STYLING BY MAGGIE RUGGIERO FOR HELLO ARTISTS; PROP STYLING BY ANDREW