

### **CHARCUTIERE – FORCEMEATS**

The term Forcemeat or farce, is used to describe the basic mixture that needs to be prepared in order to produce charcuterie products. The word farce comes from the Latin farcire. A farce or forcemeat is a ground seasoned mixture of meat, game, poultry, fish or vegetables, prepared as a dish on its own or used to stuff other numerous other items such as eggs, meat, fish and poultry, pastry shells and perhaps even pasta. Such dishes are prepared in the Garde Manger. Forcemeats are used in the preparation of a various cold dishes such as pate, terrines, galantines, ballotines, quenelle, roulade, mousse and mousseline.

There are many different methods of obtaining excellent results, but a good forcemeat must be light and airy; it must release its flavour as it melts on the tongue. This is equally true of a forcemeat made entirely with meat, or one which includes eggs, bread or even flour.

A forcemeat consists of three elements: firstly, the main flavouring ingredient, which gives the pate its dominant flavour and usually its name too. Secondly, the pork, which is not absolutely essential, but which gives a good pate its smoothness. Thirdly, the pork fat which, in the right quantities make the pate light, gives it its individual, melting consistency, and is unrecognizable as fat. Added to these we have seasoning with possibly other meat, nuts or mushrooms. It is an extremely simple recipe.

Success in making forcemeat depends on the binding agents, which, in other types of forcemeat, would consist of eggs or breadcrumbs. In a pure meat forcemeat, the binding agent is the meat's natural protein which holds the other ingredients together. But at high temperatures, it tends to coagulate which makes it useless as a binding agent. As a result, any preparation of filling must be done at the lowest practical temperatures, and the mixture never allowed reaching room temperature. This would be enough to risk ruining the filling. Cold, cold and cold again must therefore be the watchword throughout the whole process of preparation.

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A point which is often disregarded in cookery becomes of the greatest importance in all filling or pates: the finest meat, the freshest fish, the best hung game, only these are good enough. There are a few problems with game and game birds which live in their natural surroundings and feed from natural foods. There is more of a problem with fish. People living on the coast should have no problem procuring fresh fish, but for anyone else fish should be bought from reputable fish-mongers only where one can be sure that the fish will have been properly refrigerated before it reaches the consumer. It is quite a different matter with veal, pork and poultry. Modern production and feeding methods have made it difficult to find a good piece of pork in most industrialized countries. A firm, meaty joint from an animal fed by natural means is very different from commercially reared pork, which is usually of a good, light colour but poor texture.

Regardless of whether you are making a simple, country style terrine, or an exotic quail pate with truffles, pay attention to quality. It is sad that the wide choice in the shops today make this more important than ever before, but there is a solution to the problem, organizing your menu around foods available fresh on the market. This is not a new idea but it guarantees quality and is essential to a good forcemeat. One disadvantage of forcemeat is its richness, so do not eat excessive quantities of pates and pies. They should be eaten as carefully as they have been prepared.

There are just about as many forcemeats as there are different kinds of pates and terrines. Every forcemeat is unique, if only by virtue of slight variations in composition and seasoning. Nevertheless there are only a few number of very similar ways of making forcemeats, the main variation consisting primarily of the various binding agents. A forcemeat should, as far as possible, hold together- bind- without any other help. The natural protein in the main ingredient should bind sufficiently, thus retaining all the full flavour of the meat or fish. Protein binding is thus the only form of binding when lean meat and pork fat are used. Other binding agents which give a deliciously smooth filling when used correctly are: white bread with milk or cream, whole eggs, flour panada or rice.

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It is essential to release as much protein as possible from the meat by careful chopping. But heavy work, with any implement, produces heat and in turn coagulates the protein and diminishes its binding qualities. This seems to be a vicious circle, but can be overcome easily if a few basic rules are followed.

- Chill all ingredients thoroughly. Even the utensils, for example the mincer, should be cold.
- Season the meat as you cut it: salt helps release the proteins.
- When chopping meat make sure the equipment are in right condition.
- Chill the ingredients after each stage of the recipe.

Depending on the ingredients and methods of preparation of the recipe, some ingredients such as the fat or cream can be frozen, and the frozen pieces of fat and frozen crushed cream will help keep the other ingredients cool during the mincing process.

Important Culinary terms associated with Forcemeat:

Pate: from the old French *paste*, meaning paste.

Terrine: from the Latin *Terra*, meaning earth.

Galantine: from the old French *galant*, meaning gorgeous or showy; Also from the old French term *galine*, meaning chicken.

Ballotine: from the Italian *Balla*, meaning ball.

Quenelle: from the Alcasian French *knodel*, meaning dumpling

Roulade: from the French *rouler*, meaning to roll

Mousse/Mousseline: from the French, meaning froth.

### **COMPOSITION OF THE FORCMEAT**

Traditional forcemeat/farce is made up of four parts:

1. The Meat (Primary Ingredient)
2. The Binder
3. Seasoning, Flavoring and Garnish
4. The Additives

The Meat: Consists of three elements:

- *The Dominant Meat* (basic meat) which could include veal, game, poultry, rabbit, duck, or even fish. This will provide the dominant flavor and will also name the dish. e.g. chicken liver in a Chicken Liver Pate. These ingredients should be fresh and of prime quality. All bones, skin, sinews and gristle must be removed and the flesh cut up into ½” pieces for grinding. The dominant meat normally accounts for 40% of the meat component.

- *Lean Pork* which contributes to the bulk as well as the flavor. This will be about 30% of the meat component.

- *Pork fat* which gives richness and smoothness to the product as well as for its binding qualities. This too will be 30% of the meat component.

The Binding Agent: To lighten the farce and to give it a finer texture, binding agents are needed. These are typically used in the making of poultry, fish and vegetable farce. Game, veal and pork do have their own binding qualities, with the protein from the meat acting as binding agents. Binding could consist of egg yolks and/or egg whites; fresh bread soaked in milk, cream or stock; thickened bechamel sauce(panada); beurre manie (uncooked butter/flour mixture); or even cooked rice.

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### Seasoning Flavoring and Garnish:

Salt is an important part of the forcemeat. It helps to bring out the natural flavors of the other elements. 20 Gms of salt / kilo of the mixture is a rough guideline to use. The salt must be evenly mixed to ensure equal distribution. Seasoning should not be extravagant to cover up for inferior quality ingredient. One mistake is to use excessive MSG for this purpose. Flavorings such as herbs and spices give character to the product. The garnish is related to the farce to which it is added. A central garnish – lamb fillet in a lamb farce, strips of ham in a pork farce, or a piece of goose liver I a game farce – provides a visual focal point when the farce is sliced. Garnishes could also be dispersed or interspersed throughout the farce and would include pistachio, crushed peppercorns, diced truffle, capers, gherkins, stuffed olives, mushrooms and similar ingredients which will provide contrast and relief in the mass of the forcemeat.

### The Additives:

Many additives are included in the forcemeat. These include Nitrates and Nitrites of Sodium and Potassium, MSG, Sodium Erythorbate, BHT and BHA, Salt Petre.

These additives will enhance the color, increase shelf life, contribute to the taste and flavor and prevent/delay the fat from going rancid.

### **METHODS OF MAKING FARCE/ FORCEMEAT:**

The meat being used to make the farce as well as the equipment to grind it like the buffalo chopper or the food processor *must* be absolutely chilled before use. Such chilling is essential as it facilitates clean grinding of the farce, as opposed to tearing which inhibits the release of the protein which in turn later binds the farce and gives it the correct texture. A sharp cutting blade is also essential.

The process of grinding involves three stages:

- First the ingredients are coarsely ground through a medium holed plate
- It is then passed through a small holed plate
- If the farce is to be ground to a fine textured paste it can be emulsified in a food processor A small amount of crushed ice can be added during the emulsifying stage. This helps to maintain the temperature of the farce during the grinding.
- Finally, the farce is passed through a sieve to remove any trace of sinew, gristle or skin that might have remained during the grinding.

Remember, that the process may not require all the stages mentioned. For a coarse farce, like that required for a salami sausage, only the first two stages are required.

There are times when the food grinder is not available. In that case, the meat can be placed in the freezer for 30 to 60 minutes, rendering it partially frozen. This is done so that when it is placed in the food processor, the interaction of the blade against the partially frozen meat poultry or fish results in it being cut up, much the way it would if put through a meat grinder.

### **Herb and Spice Seasoning Blends:**

Garde Manger chefs will develop their own blend of seasoning mix for the different products they make. The degree of strength will vary from a mild, light blend for fish and seafood roulade

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to a medium blend for pork and veal terrine to a heavy blend for a game pate. Ideally, the herb and spice blend should be of a dry nature and finely powdered so that it blends in well with the farce. However, some chefs prefer to use the fresh variety, especially of herbs. If the herbs are fresh, they need to be chopped very finely. Spice blends are a matter of personal choice.

### Seasoning Blend I

(All Purpose mixture, from Escofier's *Le Guide Culinaire*)

5 parts bayleaf 4 parts clove 4 parts cinnamon 3 parts coriander

3 parts ginger 3 parts mace 6 parts nutmeg 5 parts Bl. Pepper

5 parts W.Pepper 1 part cayenne pepper 3 parts thyme

### Seasoning Blend II

(Good For Fish Farce)

7 parts thyme 6 parts W. Pepper 4 parts nutmeg 3 parts dill seed

3 parts bayleaf 3 parts clove 3 parts coriander 3 parts cumin

### Seasoning Blend III

(Good or Meat and Poultry Farce)

3 parts W Pepper 2 parts clove 2 parts tarragon 1 part all spice

1 part ground nutmeg 1 part each cumin, thyme, paprika, and marjoram

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### Seasoning Blend IV

(Good for Game and Rich Meat Farce)

7 parts juniper berries 4 parts cumin 3 parts basil 3 parts clove

3 parts bayleaf 3 parts garlic 3 parts ginger 3 parts nutmeg

3 parts black pepper 3 parts white pepper 2 parts marjoram



### **ADDITIONAL HELPFUL NOTES:**

**PREDOMINANT MEAT:** determines what the forcemeat will taste like( typically untender cuts).

**SECONDARY MEAT:** it is most often lean pork, chicken or veal and is used to supplement the primary meat and should meet the following criteria:

- Neutral in flavour- compliments other meats.
- High in proteins and moisture.
- Binds well.
- Low cost.
- Availability.

### **PORK FAT**

- Flavour - neutral, blends well with other seasonings.
- Consistency - always buttery and smooth.
- Higher melting point.
- Availability.
- Inexpensive.

### **PRIMARY BIND**

- Meat, fat and salt are the primary bind.
- Meat and fat must be cold.
- Salt brings out the myosin to helps in bind.

### **SECONDARY BIND**

- Eggs are the secondary bind( they are not always needed).
- Panada is a starch product used to absorb the moisture and ensure that the products is not dry.

**PANADA:** A secondary binder used in forcemeats. All panadas have a farinaceous base to stabilize the fat of the forcemeats by absorption of the natural juices when cooked, thus causing a swelling without separation( starch absorbs moisture before fat).

- Bread- for fish.
- Flour- for fish and meat.
- Cooked rice- all types.
- Cooked Potato- white meats.

### **TESTING FORCEMEATS**

Cook a small amount of forcemeat to check flavour and consistency. Wrap a small amount of forcemeat in a plastic wrap, secure the ends, poach in a 160 degree F water bath, shock to chill, taste.

### **GARNISH FOR FORCEMEAT**

Different types of food products are used for garnishes of forcemeats, they must be compatible with the type of meat used. Pistachio nuts, diced ham, tongue or truffle are some examples.

### **SIGNS OF A BROKEN FORCEMEAT**

- Loss of fat.
- Loss of moisture.
- Loss of consistency.
- Loss of volume.
- Loss of flavour.

### **REASONS FOR BAD FORCEMEAT**

- Meat too warm while grinding.
- Equipment too warm while grinding.
- Dull blades on the grinder or food processor which generates friction.
- Cooking time too long.
- Cooking temperature too high.

### **SPICES AND SEASONINGS**

It is difficult for us to imagine the immense variety of seasonings used by cooks in the past, so we tend to forget that knowledge of seasoning was indispensable to the medieval cook. In the days before refrigerators they were used to hide the taste and smell of foods which were no longer fresh. Pepper, for example, not only masked such flavours- it also delayed the process of decay by up to 24 hours. Pies, however, required a profusion of seasonings for other quite special reasons. Seasoning were both rare and expensive: pepper for example was worth its weight in gold and some businesses made their profits in dealing with spices alone. One pound of Nutmeg costs as much as seven fattened oxen, according to a price of 1393. So spices became a status symbol and were most used where they created the maximum impression - that is in the pies, the most showy of all the dishes brought to the table.

Wild boar and juniper, for example: these bitter berries can be added to the basic seasoning to complement any game dish. A little marjoram and garlic also brings out the flavour of the game very well. But we must avoid strongly flavoured herbs with delicate venison pate, where grated lemon or orange peel are better than marjoram. Rosemary and sage go well with poultry, and concentrated fresh orange juice goes well with duck. Another idea for duck is to add coarsely chopped green peppercorns, as in one variation of foie gras. Thus, there are no limits to the possible variations.